# *MR MOM: THE ANDROGYNOUS FATHER*

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# *ABSTRACT*

Fathering is a behaviour that has existed as long as humankind. While the biological core of parenting remained unchanged throughout history, the social limits and antecedents of parenting have evolved, and been modified over the centuries. This thesis is a theoretical consideration of a modern style of fathering - that of androgynous fatherhood. The androgynous father is one who embodies both masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours and who is highly involved in the parenting process. The purpose of the discussion is to illustrate the advantages an androgynous father offers to parents and children, over traditional or sharing father figures, and to demonstrate the capability of fathers to be more effective in parenting. This is achieved through an examination of the social nature of parenting and through a disputation concerning the assumed biological determinants of fathering or mothering behaviour. Evidence from primary caregiving fathers and cross cultural research are included in this examination. It is amply illustrated that the father is capable of adopting feminine characteristics and the behaviours of

the androgynous father. In addition, androgynous fathering is applied to attachment to demonstrate the practical significance androgynous fathering offers. It is concluded that androgynous fathering is advantageous in encompassing masculine and feminine characteristics, and fits in well with the evolving family that disregards traditional sex roles.

# *1*

# *INTRODUCTION*

One issue in developmental psychology that will always receive attention is parenting. For centuries the mother's role has been theorised about and examined. Fathering has traditionally received less attention, but has moved to share the spotlight in recent years. After Lamb's (1975) hallmark paper "Fathers: Forgotten Contributors to Child Development", a new emphasis was placed on the role and involvement of the father in child development. Research continues to define and explore the roles of both mother and father and to examine the influence these have over the child's psychological development.

A recent development has seen the literature on parenting move away from a descriptive emphasis, to become concerned with singular components which directly relate to the positive development of the

family. As a result, individual characteristics or factors are beginning to emerge as more influential or important, replacing the old broad categories of parenting styles. Many of these characteristics being identified are independent of the parenting style adopted, and are a product of personality or sex-roles. One topic that has received attention is the influence of parent's gender on the family. While mainly concentrating on the effects of biological sex, a small proportion of the work has started to consider the effects of gender, i.e. masculinity and femininity. Consequently, it is an opportune time for the examination of androgynous fathers - fathers who have both masculine *and* feminine traits and behaviours.

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the advantageous nature of an androgynous father over traditional or shared fathers. It also is aimed at confirming that adoption of the androgynous father role is possible for men, and non-destructive to children because parenting roles are socially constructed to reflect the values of society. As such the androgynous father fulfils a role that society is beginning to emphasise and value.

It is pertinent at this point to provide a brief description of some of the concepts or ideas that will be discussed. Male and female are the sex an individual is endowed with and is biologically based. Sex-roles are a set of behaviour expectations and norms for males or females (Myers, 1993). Masculine and feminine are genders which are socially constructed distinctions. Masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours are gender characteristics and behaviours that can be exhibited by *either* males or females. Androgyny is a gender-type which produces high levels of masculinity and femininity in an individual of either sex. There are societal expectations for child rearing behaviour which are sex specific, but these are *social* and not *biological* in construction.

Androgynous fathering is a style of fathering in which the father utilises masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours in their parenting. An androgynous father would, therefore, be expected to have an androgynous gender-type. Additionally, the androgynous father is highly involved in childcare and nurturance. This definition also has the implication, "that women should not be confined to child rearing and housework, and that a man should not take his identity solely from a career and other worldly pursuits" (Rotundo, 1985 p

17). A shared parent is one who attempts an egalitarian relationship in childcare and endeavours to share all childcare tasks with their partner. Fathers who are shared parents are highly involved, but they are not necessarily androgynous. Shared parenting is the joint involvement of traditional parents, not highly involved androgynous parents.

The 1990's are proving to be an era in which traditional sex-role stereotypes are more and more ignored or consciously adjusted (e.g. de Leon, 1993). In all aspects of life, such as work or dress, individuals are feeling less constrained by the expectations of society (e.g. Duncan (1982) demonstrated that recent cohorts are leading a rejection of sex typing). Fathering is no exception. While still a very small minority, the number of men displaying androgynous fathering is increasing (Rotundo, 1985). In view of this and the increasing changes in society itself, it seems valuable to examine this new style of fatherhood with regard to the psychological development of men, women and children.

A clearer picture of the emergence and significance of androgynous fathering can be gained from examining the more liberal

conceptualisations of parenting in the 1990's. Androgynous fathering is an asset to the new feminist framework of a family as egalitarian and non gender-role specific. To examine this type of fatherhood requires consideration of the traits and behaviours which males and females share. As Grbich (1994) has noted, any new conceptualisation of the family that is going to uphold the feminist framework needs to avoid the limitations of biological determinism, and emphasise equality rather than difference.

Roles are resistant to change and, as such, changes in parenting roles cannot be expected in the next few years. It is much more likely that society will see changes in the next generation (Riley 1985). The purpose of this thesis is to promote an awareness of an emerging modern style of fathering that may be beneficial to all involved. As Gerson, Alpert, & Richardson (1984) point out in their review of mothering, contemporary public administration is very clearly entrenched in traditional values. For example, baby changing rooms are usually located in the women's bathroom. Studies, such as the present one, are aimed at an awareness of new values and the possible benefits they hold. Gerson, Alpert, & Richardson (1984) state, "the well-being of both parents and children is important and...generally

an increase in the well-being and self-esteem of one will effect the other." (p. 451). Therefore, if androgynous parenting is advantageous this increases the psychological well being of mothers, fathers, and children.

As indicated above the crux of the argument to be presented here is that while reproduction is a biological function, parenting roles are a social phenomenon. In order to encourage more freedom for the mother in and out of the home, traditional stereotypes and roles should be abandoned, and men should participate more fully in childcare. Men can try to expand their role to involve higher levels of caregiving which will, it is hoped, relieve the mother of some of her role stress, or burden. It is the contention of this thesis that to do this, and do it well, the optimal father is an androgynous one.

While society has enforced roles and functions for mothers and fathers, these functions are socially constructed (this is of course with the exception of such things as breastfeeding and pregnancy). As Riley (1985) has pointed out, "There is no biological imperative requiring inflexible parental roles." (p. 19). Androgynous fathering requires the recognition of the positive characteristics that feminine

*and* masculine traits can offer to parenting and children's development. Further, it requires recognition that some behaviours or traits which are beneficial for parenting are not sex based and have only gained gender specification through historical expectations. That is, it must be recognised that parenting roles and behaviours are largely socially based and, as such, have flexibility in who has to fill them.

As well as illustrating the positive factors of masculinity and femininity, it will be pointed out that feminine characteristics and behaviours need not come from a female, nor masculine from a male. Androgynous fathering occurs when males display characteristics and behaviours typically associated with either males or females. In relation to this point, a proportion of the following discussion focuses on research about men in parental roles of various kinds. This is done to illustrate the social constructional nature of the father's role, and to show that men are capable of androgynous fathering.

Some indication of the benefits of father involvement (an aspect of androgynous fathering) comes from Riley (1985) who notes that traditionally a higher level of father involvement has been associated

with benefits for children in the areas of intellectual growth, school performance, social development, self-esteem, and sex-role identity. High levels of father involvement have also been shown to be beneficial to women's health and family functioning (Riley, 1985). In addition, it engenders self-awareness and personal growth in the fathers themselves. Little of this research, however, has distinguished between high father involvement and gender type. This helps to demonstrate that a vital part of the advantage of the androgynous father (in addition to his gender-type) is his high involvement in childcare.

To demonstrate the superiority of the androgynous father, indicate the social construction of parenting roles, and illustrate the potential for any individual to fill the social parenting roles, this thesis will take a number of steps. First, the general principles of masculine and feminine parenting styles will be considered. Based on this and supportive evidence, it will then be surmised and advocated that androgynous fathering is an advantageous style of fathering. The example of attachment will then be considered. Attachment is a significant component of socioemotional development and provides a practical example of androgynous fathering.

In chapter two the history of parenting is examined, in an attempt to show the very social nature of this process, and how history and society are very influential on fathering. It also illustrates the important position androgynous fathering can play in aiding the mother. Chapters three and four then deal with masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours respectively, and illustrate the lack of biological influences on fathering, as well as examining what positive influences each type of characteristic offers to parenting. Next, having established the social and flexible nature of fathering, chapter five draws together masculine and feminine traits to form and advocate the composite of androgynous fathering. This chapter discusses research done in this area and the benefits to children of androgynous fathers. Finally, chapter six takes what is known, and what is theorised about, the ideal of androgynous fathering and applies it to parent-child attachment.

# *1.1 A COMPARATIVE VIEW - THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY*

It is appropriate to discuss how a child's psychological development is positively influenced in a traditional family. A traditional family constitutes a father as provider and a mother as caregiver, with both parents subscribing to traditional sex-roles. This is by no means an attempt to summarise the vast and involved area of developmental psychology. Human development is a powerful and complex process (Santrock, 1995). From the traditional family, however, there are some features which emerge as promoting healthy development, both cognitively and socioemotionally. These features are presented to provide a background comparison for the remainder of the discussion which relates to child development.

Until late childhood, parents are the central influence in children's development. There are various theories which explain what is beneficial during childhood for successful psychological development. These include Erikson (in Santrock, 1995) who, at different stages, says parents should provide physical comfort and give responsibility, but not restrain or punish the child too much or

make them feel inferior. Additionally, social learning theory states that behaviour and environment are very important for development. A child will learn and develop through modelling or imitation. While the various theories have a lot to offer, few offer specific characteristics or behaviours that are seen as influential over development. Santrock (1995) has produced a book on life-span development and by reviewing this one may ascertain some characteristics and behaviours that appear again and again as influencing successful development. Santrock divides development into two areas - cognitive and socioemotional.

From the research Santrock presents it is evident that cognitive or academic competence is associated with particular parental behaviours. Both parents talking and reading to the child encourages language development. Academic competence is also associated with maternal behaviours of effective communication, a warm relationship, positive expectations regarding achievement, and the use of rule, rather than authority, based discipline. From the father, involvement in play, and listening and responding to questions, promotes cognitive ability.

For socioemotional development there are a variety of helpful behaviours or characteristics. As discussed in chapter six, attachment is central to positive socioemotional development. The key to a secure (and therefore positive) attachment is sensitivity and responsiveness from the caregiver. In a broader sense, the two factors Santrock summarises as most important to successful socioemotional development, are acceptance and responsiveness. In regard to sex-role socialisation, children appear to learn a lot from modelling, identification, and imitation of their parents. Consequently, the sex-roles parents fill and advocate are most likely to be what their children will take on. It can be liberally summarised then that the factors in a traditional family which promote successful psychological development are reading, communication, realistic expectations, rule based discipline, play, sensitivity, responsiveness, and acceptance.

As stated above the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the advantages an androgynous father offers to the family. For the purposes of comparison, it is therefore important to provide a baseline specifically of the traditional father and his impact on child development. The traditional father fulfils traditional paternal roles and is masculine gender-typed. The traditional father strongly emphasises appropriate

gender-type characteristics and behaviours, and is seen very much as a play (rather than caregiving) figure (Clarke-Stewart, 1980). The strongly sex-typed father (the traditional father) is less involved in child rearing (Russell, 1978). In the traditional family, the father has usually had the most influence over socialisation, and intellectual development (Brudon, 1994).

## *1.2 ROLES, NORMS, AND STEREOTYPES*

The basis of this argument is that there is a difference between the characteristics and behaviours associated with gender and sex. Sex pertains to the biological distinctions which differentiate male from female, and gender refers to the social distinctions between male and female (Reber, 1985). Normally male gender and sex go together, as do female gender and sex. However, and as vital to this argument, the biological sex of person does not restrict the gender characteristics and behaviours they adopt. Therefore, an androgynous father will possess the sex of male, but will have the gender characteristics and behaviours of masculine and feminine.

Ferree (1990) hypothesised, "By separating the gender given to specific roles from the gender of the individuals who occupy them, [one creates] a model for an authentically structural analysis of family relationships" (p. 869). Looking at parenthood, she cites the examples of primary caregiving fathers who adopt "feminine nurturing" qualities as they care for their children, and women who are moving into "father" roles by working and having others to care for their children. For these reasons the purpose of this thesis is not to say that role differentiation is nonbeneficial, but to say that the problem of restricted parental roles is sex linked role differentiation.

One may ask why it is important to understand the social nature of gender characteristics and behaviours. For androgynous fathering to be fully understood and successfully undertaken, men need to take on both masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours. While traditionally this is limited in actuality, for example, men do household repairs and women do childcare (Myers, 1993), this is because of social and cultural pressures, expectations, and restraints. As will be illustrated in the chapters about history and culture, the variety of gender roles across cultures, and over time, shows that society constructs our gender roles. If parental behaviours were

solely or predominantly biology based, then there would not be such a difference between the father roles of different cultures or periods in history. Because parental behaviours are socially constructed, men need not be precluded from a fuller involvement in their child's development.

Understanding roles, norms, and stereotypes, is an important part of changing attitudes and, consequently behaviours. If roles and norms that hinder or help androgynous fathering are understood, it may be easier for children to be raised using androgynous fathering, which is, as is the contention, more beneficial to them. This is because social behaviour occurs with greater ease when individuals know what is expected and accepted within society (Myers, 1993). For example, two in three still think that, for children, the ideal family situation is one in which the father has a job and the mother stays home and cares for the children (Gallup, 1990). An understanding of the socially constructed nature of the roles of parenthood may allow more androgynous fathers to emerge.

Norms are socially developed expectations of behaviour which are followed by the majority of society as a matter of course (Myers,

1993). Norms restrain and control society, but they also lubricate the social machinery. Social behaviour occurs with greater ease when that which is both expected and accepted is readily observable (Myers, 1993). A role is a set of norms associated with a given social position. Norms form roles. Thus, social roles are influenced by gender norms. Women have the norm role of caring for children, and consequently this has become a social role. Additionally, feminine traits are parts of social roles which are reinforced for women throughout life. Because men are not reinforced in these traits, such as the nurturance of parenting, it is more a matter of acquisition for them in adulthood when they may choose to display these traits. Women have already been reinforced to display the traits and so it is not such a conscious effort for them. In relation to androgynous fathering, gender norms need to be reviewed to allow men to include in their paternal role, the expression of nurturance and sensitivity that is a precursor of healthy psychological development of the child and parent.

The basic causes of gender differences in social behaviour are the roles that reflect society's sexual division of labour. Men tend to be found in roles demanding social and physical power, and women in

more nurturant roles. Each sex tends to exhibit the behaviours expected of those who fill such sex-roles and have their skills and beliefs shaped according to these roles. Thus, males believe and act in accordance with the sex-role set up for males.

Strong gender stereotypes exist. A stereotype is a set of relatively fixed, simplistic, overgeneralisations about a group or class of people (Reber, 1985). It has been found that gender stereotypes are stronger than racial ones (Myers, 1993). Dominant stereotypes summarise females as more emotional, and men as leaders. (Myers, 1993) Real behavioural differences between the sexes are small (Martin, 1987). Stereotypes are not prejudices, but they may support them. Stereotypes help rationalise the inferior status of the stereotyped party (Hacker, 1951). For example, it is most feminists' contention that the stereotype of women as maternal, nurturing, and caring is utilised by society to maintain and rationalise women's position as caregivers and not providers.

Gender stereotypes and norms also effect chosen behaviour and actual performance. For example, a study by Bem & Lenney (1976) found that subjects preferred to perform sex-typed rather than sex

inappropriate behaviour, even if it cost them money. That is, the subjects were preferentially choosing to fulfil stereotypes. In another study by Hargreaves, Bates, & Foot (1985), boys and girls did better on an identical task when it was labelled as appropriate behaviour for the same sex as the child. This is a very strong indication of the social nature of sex-role norms, their effects, and the way they are rewarded. For precisely the same task children performed better when they thought the task was deemed appropriate -for their sex- by their society. Both these studies illustrate people's reluctance, conscious and unconscious, to perform sex inappropriate behaviour within society. This has an impact on androgynous fathering, because with this style of fathering, men will adopt feminine characteristics and behaviours which are traditionally disfavoured when seen in men (e.g. McCreary, 1994). In relation to this, it is pertinent to note that for both of the above studies, the effects were much stronger for the male than the female subjects. Males appeared to feel the pressure of sex stereotypes more than females.

Contemporary society has tended to function with feminine mothers and masculine fathers (Bem, 1974). What happens when these roles are violated? Traditionally, men have been ridiculed and women

penalised for moving out of the traditional roles (e.g. McCreary, 1994; Bilimoria & Piderit, 1994). Today men are more accepted in different roles (Russell, 1978). Thus the time is right to consider an extension in roles for men. Challenging the acceptance of social roles and stereotypes is the basis of the present argument. A hypothesis of this thesis is that parenting roles are a social construct, not biological. Sex-role stereotypes are what presently support and sustain the traditional roles of "mother" and "father".

In his study of primary caregiving fathers, Russell (1983) also found a number of negative aspects to role reversal. Most of these were for the males and included feeling a threat to their identity and status as a male and reduced self-esteem. The main problem for women was guilt over leaving their children. Both sexes talked about the tension, conflicts, frustration and demands that role reversal produced. Consequently, it is not surprising that men have not traditionally been heavily involved in childrearing or moving away from their primary and all encompassing role as provider. It will be illustrated here that in fact these roles are socially constructed and hence men are free to adapt to the advantageous androgynous fathering role.

## *1.3 ANDROGYNY - DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION*

The following section is concerned with defining the concept of androgyny and discussing its evolution and subsequent research in the area. The concept of androgynous fathering (which *does differ* from androgyny as a personal trait) is briefly defined here, but will be fully discussed in chapter five.

In 1973 Constantinople wrote an article questioning the definition of masculine and feminine as two distinct constructs, and challenging the psychological establishment to reconsider them in terms of dimensions, allowing greater sex-role versatility. In response, in 1974, Sandra Bem proposed the theory and measurement of dimensional gender-types and androgyny. Bem (1974) defined androgyny as the possession of both masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours to high levels, for example, being both assertive and yielding and both instrumental and expressive. She proposed that a mixed or androgynous self-concept would allow an

individual to freely engage in both "masculine" and "feminine" behaviours.

In Bem's (1974) inventory, individuals are classified in one of four categories. People are classified as androgynous (high in masculinity and femininity), feminine (high on femininity and low on masculinity), masculine (high on masculinity and low on femininity), or undifferentiated (low on femininity and masculinity). Feminine and masculine gender typed individuals are regarded as traditionally gender typed.

While androgynous individuals have the best of both masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours they additionally have characteristics and behaviours that are highly beneficial which are due to their androgynous nature. These include flexibility, in being able to adopt the appropriate behaviour for a situation from the range of masculine and feminine behaviours.

Bem has theorised and found (e.g. Bem 1974, Bem & Lenney, 1976) androgynous individuals of both sexes to be the epitome of psychological health. She concludes this is due to their adaptability

because they are less restricted in the range of behaviours available to them in various situations (Bem, 1974). Further support for Bem's theory is conflicting. A fair conclusion to reach, after reading the literature, may be that while androgyny contributes substantially and positively to psychological well-being, it is not appropriate for use as a clinical tool (for treatment or diagnosis), as some would suggest. One common finding is that the resulting flexibility and adaptability of androgyny are features which, in addition to the best of masculine or feminine, are positive and psychologically healthy for androgynous individuals (e.g. Lubinski, Tellegen, & Butcher, 1981). Related to this is another area that androgynous individuals are superior in, person perception accuracy (Card, Jackson, Stollack, & Ialongo, 1986). Androgynous individuals appear to produce a more accurate perception of the needs and wants of other people. Furthermore, androgyny has been related to higher levels of self-esteem, and greater creativity (Davidson & Sollie, 1987).

A study by de Leon (1993) found that 51% of his subjects (male and female) were classified as androgynous, indicating high degrees of both masculine and feminine traits. This could indicate two points: Firstly that society is moving away from rigidly stereotypical

behaviours and self-definitions (and thus opening opportunities for androgynous fathering), and secondly, that psychology is beginning to be able to measure the subtleties of gender identification more precisely. The latter point had earlier led Heilbrun & Bailey (1986) to carry out research to determine if masculine and feminine are independent traits. Their results did not support the assumption of independence, rather they showed a positive relation between the presence of masculine and feminine traits within the same individual. This finding held for both male and female participants and supports the concept of dimensional gender-types.

Having set the definition and considered the research on androgyny generally, it is important to provide a working definition of the androgynous father. As is thoroughly explored in chapter five, an androgynous father is a father who encompasses both masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours in his personal and parenting attitudes and behaviours. The androgynous father is more involved and interactive than the traditional father. It is significant to clarify here that while an androgynous father encompasses shared parenting, fathers who adopt shared parenting are not necessarily androgynous. While extensive work has been done on androgynous characteristics

or behaviour, very little literature exists on androgyny as a parenting style. Two pieces of research that do directly address the issue of androgyny and fatherhood are from Rotundo (1985) and Russell (1978). Both these are discussed in detail in chapter five.

In summation, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the advantages an androgynous father offers to the family, over a traditional or shared father. It will be illustrated that parenting roles and behaviour are socially constructed, and as such there is no biological evidence to exclude the father from a more involved role in childcare. The benefits of masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours to parenting are examined and reviewed in terms of the androgynous father. Finally the example of attachment will be discussed in regard to androgynous fatherhood.

# 2

# *THE HISTORY OF PARENTHOOD AND PARENTING*

This chapter contains an overview of father and motherhood through history, starting from prehistoric times. This discussion illustrates the social nature of parenting roles. It is a fact that to parent a child - that is, fertilising, conceiving and giving birth - is a biological capacity. The contention is that parenting roles- the behaviours that contributes to the raising and nurturing of a child - are a deeply ingrained social function. It is a common position in society today that parenting roles and their subsequent behaviours are biologically controlled and produced (Lamb & Goldberg, 1982). Many believe that the skills required to successfully raise a child are provided by biology and not from learning.

The following description illustrates the massive influence that historical and social setting have had on parenting behaviour and expectation. This in turns rebuts the notion that parenting roles are biological, by demonstrating the evolving, flexible and adaptive nature of the mother and father roles. In addition, the history of motherhood illustrates enormous societal expectations placed on the mother in terms of child care and shows how the androgynous father could help relieve this pressure with his increased involvement.

## *2.1 FATHERHOOD*

Since the 1970's, the influence of the father in child development has become more and more recognised. After Lamb's landmark book of 1976, the role of the father in child development received much attention. Since the 1970's fathers have become, and been allowed to become, much more involved in their children's upbringing. For example, it is now common practise for a father to be present for his child's birth, a rare occurrence even 20 years ago. It is noted, however, that "Direct paternal involvement in childrearing- particularly in the care of infants- reflects a radical departure from

nearly all previous patterns of family structure" (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981 p 102). This perhaps signals a new family structure that is emerging that is suited to the androgynous father. Rotundo (1985) may be correct in seeing the future of fatherhood as "Androgynous Fatherhood" (p 16).

The history of fatherhood from prehistoric times shows that the paternal role, and indeed the influence of the father, have all fluctuated over time. This helps to illustrate how fathering has developed and evolved in response to social expectations and dictates. That is, the evolution and changes the father's role has undergone can be seen to be related to the period and society of each distinct role. It also suggests that reducing gender type emphasis and increasing androgyny in the population (e.g. Bem, 1974) may mean fatherhood is developing towards a more equivalent state with the role of the mother in regard to familial work load. Furthermore, the following discussion of the father's changing role through history indicates that fatherhood is flexible in the roles and emphasis it acquires, and can take very different forms when it is required to - fundamental for successful androgynous fathering.

One aspect of the father's role which has changed with the ideals of society is the expression of nurturance. As Bloom-Feshbach (1981) noted, the highly involved father is a fairly recent phenomenon. It is compatible with today's sensitive and expressive society to have men who acknowledge their paternal role and actively partake in it. This expressive element reflects the growing prominence of the nurturing ideal prevalent throughout history. The prominence of a nurturing ideology has, however, fluctuated over time. The veritable rise in its acceptance came in the 18th century (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981). Although from Roman times (200 A.D.) to the middle of the 18th century there was a development of this nurturing ideology within society. Slowly, the notion of sensitive, emphatic, and emotional relations between people became a popular ideal, first for mothers, and eventually for fathers (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981). Thus, fatherhood began to emphasise nurturant roles. Again, the strong influence of society's expectations and norms is represented. The sensitivity of the contemporary father is seen by some to be rooted in the family interaction of the new bourgeois class after industrialisation (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981). As today's society encourages interaction and emotional experience, the father is (again) encouraged to encounter this with his children.

Another evolving feature of fatherhood has been the changing emphasis on the role of provider. For the past two centuries, and indeed until the 1960's, it was opportune for the fathering role to be focussed around being a provider. Industrialisation meant the father was away from the immediate proximity of the home (in the factory) and his main function evolved into that of economic provider. Bloom-Feshbach (1981) notes, "It is ironic that, as the nuclear, intensive, inward-turning modern family developed, the father became less involved in childrearing, especially among the working classes...This phenomenon - working away from home - was one of the most significant influences of the Industrial Revolution in shaping the modern father's "provider" role" (p 91).

Social influence on the father as provider can be seen as early as the time of Homo Sapiens with the emergence of a greater reliance on large game for sustenance, and the dependence on fathers to fulfil the hunting (and providing) role. As Bloom-Feshbach (1981) states, "the evolution of Homo sapiens is intertwined with the emergence of family structure" (p 75). The origin of male involvement in parenting is usually linked to increased brain capacity, bipedalism, and the birth

of altricial infants. One of the earliest social influences on the paternal role can be seen in the dictum of the division of labour. To begin with, families functioned in terms of essential survival with food gathering, care, and male-female reciprocity. With the emergence of the hunter and gather society, provision of food and sustenance, and household duties (such as childcare) began to be separated and the father began to adopt the role of provider rather than carer. Hence, from early history the influence of the development and priorities of society can be seen on the paternal role and the emphasis on being the provider.

A third area that the flexibility and social construction of the fathers role can be seen, in is the rise and fall of the father's power and authority within the family. This power and authority built up through classical times, but then began to erode from the end of the Roman period. This rise and fall reinforces that fathering is dependent on what the contemporary society wants and allows. It was with the development of an agricultural society that the father's authority and power, two roles that have left a substantial mark on the contemporary father, began to develop fully. What was the underlying cause of this development? The cause was from the social

workings of men and women. As Bloom-Feshbach (1981) explains, "Since livestock was the first "capital" to be accumulated, and men controlled it, women were rendered powerless" (p 79). The increasing power and domination of men served to increase the differentiation of sex-roles in the family. With this development of economic power, patriarchal control and the resulting power roles began to develop. This meant men had greater control over decision making, less involvement in child-rearing, and resulted in a greater segregation of household tasks (Hewlett, 1991).

The gradual destabilisation of patriarchal influence and power commenced towards the end of the Roman era (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981). As long as wealth was based on land, the authority of the father was safe. However, the resistant boundaries of the family-based society and the authority of the father broke down as the inflow of wealth of the Roman Empire permitted women and sons to acquire independent sources of fortune and power.

The father continued to lose authority in modern history, and especially with the advent of the industrial revolution. With modern times, came modern ideas and expectations, which, as consistently

demonstrated already, then influenced what was expected of and accepted from fathers. By the late 1700's community ties began to break down and were replaced with a more individualistic orientation. Bloom-Feshbach (1981) points out that "modernisation brought a significant reduction in family and informal community functions, along with a decline in the authority and responsibility of the father" (p 91). This decline occurred because many of the areas of control or functioning for the father, such as education, religion, or health, were taken over by modern institutions. Furthermore, with the greater awareness of children's needs and the nurturant ideology that prevailed, there came an emphasis on motherhood and maternal care of children. This nurturant ideology made the notion of sensitive, emphatic, emotional relations between people a preferential ideal to the old control of the father (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981). The power and influence of the father have therefore been shaped by the historical ideals and desires of society.

Contemporary society has also impacted on the role of the father. As with the nurturing ideal, provider role, and authority of the father, modern society places different emphases on different ideals. In the last 50 years societal changes have continued to produce significant

changes in the father's role. While the traditional and modern father roles of last century persevere in shaping some of the roles of the father, new expectations carry new roles and dimensions. The contemporary modern father is moving away from the industrial "absent, working father" in favour of the "sensitive new age guy" (Rotundo, 1985). There are ever increasing numbers of women returning to work, or raising their children on their own (Jacklin & McBride-Chang, 1991) and these changes have impacted on modern fatherhood. For example, society has seen the development of the "weekend father", where, for custodial reasons, father and child will only have contact on the weekend. Increasing numbers of dual-income families and househusbands also contribute to these changes (e.g. Ehrensaft, 1990; Russell, 1983).

So what relevance do these aspects (nurturing, provider, authority, and modern ideals) of the father's role have to parenting as a social concept? The change in emphasis and the change in purpose for the role of the father both indicate the flexible and social nature of this concept. This illustrates that there is little biological basis to the roles of the father. The underlying reasons for changes in the emphasis and actual role of fathers were (and are) social. Fathers are currently more

involved with their children because this is compatible with the ideology which society is currently evolving, in terms of emotions and affective expression. Similarly, fathers for the first half of this century fulfilled a paternal role of provider because society at the time was most suited to men working and providing a economic support. While this role is still relevant, it is not exclusively a fathers role any longer. A fuller representation of this social influence can be seen by considering the various roles of the father over history and the social phenomena underlying them.

It can be seen that with paternal characteristics and behaviours, for example nurturance, increases and decreases in their prominence and relevance are often dependent on the current society and ideology. This is a finding that will be repeated in the discussion of cross-cultural research. In addition, this brief and narrow coverage of the history of fatherhood shows that as society has modernised, evolved and emphasised different characteristics and behaviours, situations, or ideals so has the role of the father. If biological factors were responsible for parenting and the roles of the mother and father, the role of the father would not have conformed to such an extent to historical circumstances. Similarly, the paternal role would not have

illustrated such flexibility and fluctuations, as were evident with the rise and fall of paternal power and authority, if all that was required to raise a child was the biological capacity to do so. For the androgynous father this has the implication that a new, more involved role, cannot be precluded on a biological basis. The androgynous father may be the best style of fatherhood to fit with the evolving ideals of society.

## *2.2 MOTHERHOOD*

This section shows how the mother as primary caregiver is a socially constructed role. The social ideals which keep the mother in the home and as the dominant caregiving are based on social priorities and expectations. As such, it would provide women with more freedom to have an androgynous partner who participated more highly in child care and was socially accepted in doing so. It also suggests that androgynous fathers can fill a larger role and adopt the feminine characteristics and behaviours beneficial to parenting if the role of the mother is socially, not biologically, based. Furthermore, the feminist viewpoint illustrates that androgynous fathering is a

concept that will be welcomed by feminists at this time and fits with the feminist ideas of the new family.

The following is partially a history of motherhood, however, more prominently, it contemplates the attitudes towards motherhood that have appeared throughout history. As is the case with the literature on maternal instinct to be discussed in chapter four, most of the research on the history of motherhood comes from a feminist perspective and it is pertinent to remember this during the following discussion. It is difficult to find research on the role of the mother that is not severely outdated, or else based on or influenced by feminist thought. This is because motherhood has been examined in the past under more patriarchal conceptions, and has only received attention from feminists in the past two decades. As Gerson, Alpert, & Richardson (1984) point out, "The study of mothering in...psychological literature reflects, first, the absence of and, then, the impact of feminist consciousness in the discipline." (p. 434). They also indicate that the traditional masculine point of view of science has only looked at the instrumental value of mothering - the value of producing offspring. Feminists, however, are also concerned with the effect and role of motherhood in relation to women's lives and goals.

The feminist literature illustrates some of the more global factors of society which influence the role of the mother. These social factors include the persistence of the patriarchy, the economic advantage of women in the home, and instrumentality. The psychological literature of motherhood also expounds the views of mothers in recent times, and shows how the social view of mothers, and what they are capable of, has altered significantly. For example, mothers now often go out to work, and the psychological literature of today, promotes this in showing the minimal negative effects such action has on the child (Jacklin & McBride-Chang, 1991). This, in turn, demonstrates how social expectation and situation has expanded the role of the mother, although mothers are still largely regarded as primary caregivers (Blumberg, 1980). This is also reflected in the chapter on attachment, where much of the literature and major theorising, sees the mother to be not only primary caregiver, but also most influential in the child's development.

The latest feminist thought on motherhood is very much in support of a more autonomous mother. At the end of their study of women's experiences of motherhood, Davies & Welch (1986) discuss the

paradox that giving up childrearing may involve the loss of a traditional source of power for women. It would, however, give them access to genuine choice-making, to the right to consider themselves equal with others, and thus the right to their own self-esteem. It should be noted here that the androgynous father compliments this feminist framework of motherhood in providing increased care for the child and support for the mother.

In direct terms of the androgynous father, the influence of the patriarchy and male dominance on the mother's role has served to shut men off from high involvement in child care. The societal norm has evolved to encourage men to regard child care as out of their domain. So it is societal expectation, and not biology, that has precluded men from being involved in the parenting process. Furthermore, in view of the feminists' objective and argument, the androgynous father is a favoured concept because he will help emancipate the mother from the home in a socially prescribed and accepted way.

Any discussion of motherhood and its history usually includes some reference to the political nature of women's roles. Similarly, it is

relevant to examine the way women's *social* role impacts on mothering. There was the feeling in the 1960's that the misuse of biology based arguments obscured the understanding that caregiving is a social job (Polatnick, 1973). Consequently the idea of motherhood in its entirety was questioned and a re-evaluation of the concept occurred which emphasised the experience of the mother, and not the child. The 1970's saw a questioning of this reverse approach. It was proposed that this autonomous ideal was in fact a male construct (Everingham, 1994). As Everingham (1994) explains, "...the pursuit of autonomy by women reinforced the traditional male values associated with possessive individualism at the expense of the values of nurturance and connectedness associated with mothering." (p.3). It can therefore be seen that even within the feminist framework of motherhood, changes and adaptation occur in line with prevailing ideological and theoretical backgrounds. This further reinforces the concept of social influence over mothering.

According to feminists, mothering, and the role of the mother as the primary caregiver, have evolved through history to facilitate the continuation of the patriarchy and male dominance. Therefore, it is believed that the strongest influence society has had in shaping the

mother's role has not been in particular characteristics and behaviours, but in the overriding ideology of women as a subservient minority. For example, as Rowland (1988) encapsulates, loving allowed to women under patriarchy is mother-love, that is, love that is self-denying and self-sacrificing. The institution of motherhood as men have defined it, is based on the economic dependence of women and their enslavement in child-rearing. Rowland discusses the work of Badinter (in Rowland, 1988) who has concluded that the difference between pregnancy and primary caregiving has been conveniently confused by patriarchy and it is this that is the key to women's oppression. Much of the continuation of the patriarchy is based on economic principles - the placement of women in the home means they are unable to acquire assets or resources, which means the men maintain the wealth and the power.

In regard to modern psychology, mothers have not held a very good position, historically. While Watson's (1928 in Jacklin & McBride-Chang, 1991) blank slate theory dominated, it was mothers who were regarded as the greatest contributors to children's development and thus the ones who filled the slate. In fact, up until the 1970's it was the mother who was seen as most influential in children's

development, for better or worse. As Margaret Mead summarised, "Fathers are a biological necessity and a social accident" (Mead, in Riley 1985 p 22). While this attributed a lot of power to women, it also put them in the line of fire. Over history mothers have been blamed for schizophrenia, autism, stuttering, and many other negative developmental occurrences (Jacklin & McBride-Chang, 1991).

Nowadays, emphasis and research are moving away from mother blaming and the psychological climate is becoming friendlier. Jacklin & McBride-Chang (1991) illustrate this with the example of working mothers. In the 1940's and 50's research was concerned with the negative effects working mothers had on their children. The basic model was one of deficiency - what was missing when a mother worked, with no consideration that other positive factors may be increased or supplemented. Jacklin & McBride-Chang point out that it was not until the 1970's that the positive effects of a working mother on children's development began to be recognised. To further compliment this mother friendly climate, psychological research today is putting more emphasis on considering all the multi-dimensional factors that contribute to a situation or phenomenon. This illustrates how society is greatly influences what is allowed

within the mothering role, and how strong the social construction of the role is.

Motherhood has been influenced by societal ideals, very much in accordance with the way fatherhood has (as illustrated in 2.1). The nurturing ideal that rose to prominence during the Eighteenth Century saw mothers given a new respect, and feminine characteristics and behaviours held in high regard (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981). Similarly, as the father's role as provider has risen and fallen, the mother's role has, in a parallel fashion, emphasised staying at home and caring for the children (Hewlett, 1991). In addition, as the authority and power of the father lessened over time, the mother's authority within the home has risen (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981). Mothers at the turn of the century were viewed as technical experts producing adjusted and achieving children (Gerson et al, 1984). As the feminist literature expounds, while this increase in authority within the home was welcome, the emphasis of childrearing for women also put them back into a submissive and weakened position in society. As with fatherhood, modern motherhood has been through a lot of radical changes. More and more women choose to raise their children, for example, on their own or to do so in a lesbian relationship (e.g.

Tasker and Golombok, 1995). However, unlike fathers, while the opportunities and options for women are much increased, the prevailing norm is still women as primary caregivers and as mothers generally. Society tends to persist in viewing women as primary caregivers (Blumberg, 1980).

This review has attempted to show the socially based concept of mothering. Indeed, the feminist perspective advocates that mothering is very much related to the values and idea's of the patriarchy or men in general (Chodorow, 1978). The feminist literature's political perspective and the examination of the social influence of history have both demonstrated that the role of the mother is not based on biology, but societal expectation and idiom. It can be concluded that the norm of female behaviour related to the feminine idea of motherhood is socially and not biologically based. Therefore, if men engendered more androgynous characteristics and behaviours they could have mothering qualities too, and perhaps reduce the norm of females as primary caregivers. That is, the androgynous father displaying the feminine traits traditionally associated with females, may encourage more men to share parenting roles and behaviours.

# 3

# *MASCULINITY AND FATHERHOOD*

The arguments to be presented here suggest that the traits and behaviours associated with masculinity have, in some cases, advantages over feminine traits and behaviours, to offer parenting, and that fathers are capable of fulfilling a larger and more beneficial parenting role. The primary caregiving father research shows that men are capable of filling the primary parenting role, because this is a social and not biological role, as is evidenced by the number of men adopting role-reversal. The cross-cultural evidence illustrates the social nature of parenting roles and how roles, and gender characteristics and behaviours are socially prescribed. It also suggests that these roles are flexible across situations and cultures - reinforcing the view that norms which see women as sole primary caregivers, are Western based. In essence this chapter is illustrating the competency of fathers to fill a larger parenting role and

reinforcing the social nature of their traditional roles. In addition, the research on primary caregiving fathers and cross-cultural views of fathering highlights some of the masculine characteristics and behaviours (as seen in these fathers) which are beneficial to parenting.

## *3.1 PRIMARY CAREGIVING FATHERS*

An appropriate summary for this section is provided by Russell (1983) in his chapter, "Fathers are competent too!". He concludes that the evidence does not provide strong support for the hypothesis that there are significant biologically based sex differences in either responsiveness or sensitivity towards babies and young children or in competence in child care. He argues that any differences in child rearing ability between the sexes is, "...attributable to a complex interaction between biological factors and differences in experience, social expectations, and socialisation" (p. 114).

A basic premise of androgynous fathering is that the father is more involved in the tasks of childrearing. It is appropriate then to review the findings of research with fathers who are primary caregivers and

examine how they have adapted to full-time parenting. As is clear from the research presented in this section, the primary caregiving father is very competent and can fully handle the tasks, and display the qualities, required for childrearing. While chapter six fully covers the relationship of mothers, fathers and attachment, much of the research about primary caregiving fathers is based around attachment and consequently mention of it will be made throughout this chapter, in addition to being repeated in chapter six. The discussion of primary caregiving fathers illustrates that men are at no disadvantage when it comes to expressing maternal behaviour and very capable of doing so.

One major hurdle men, as involved or primary caregivers, face is the assumption/stereotype that they lack the sensitivity and responsiveness to rear, or even attach to, their children Research disputing this claim is abundant. Evidence of the responsive competency of fathers was found by Grbich (1990) in her study of fathers as primary caregivers. She found that fathers and mothers showed considerable similarities in terms of patience, sensitivity, and tasks done in the care of young children. Further evidence comes from Yogman, Cooley, & Kindlan (1988) who found that in the

postpartum period, traditional fathers and mothers were equally active and sensitive to newborn cues. These studies demonstrate that mothers and fathers are equally able to respond sensitively to a child. Consequently, responding and being sensitive to a child's needs appears not to be a mother only phenomenon and, contrary to beliefs, men are capable of these behaviours. While women may have the experience to learn the appropriate behaviours to go with these responses, it is evident that both men and women are able to start with the same responsiveness.

In addition to this misconception, in their study on infant-parent attachment Belsky & Rovine (1988) found that all the infants who were solely in the care of the father, at times when the mother was unable to be in this role, had attached securely (formed a strong emotional bond) to their fathers. Similarly, Russell (1983) has conducted a study of men who are primary caregivers in Australia. In his study, Russell found that infants show the same attachment behaviour to the mother and the primary caregiving father. Furthermore, he found that fathers who were the primary caregiver were very close to their children, and the children had attached securely to them. He concluded that attachment is not exclusive to the

mother, that the mother-child attachment is not unique, and that infants do not attach exclusively to a single caregiver. This then suggests that children can attach securely to more than one caregiver, being mother or father.

This research suggests that an androgynous father with increased involvement and role is in no way traumatic for the child. The androgynous father is as capable of forming a secure attachment with the child as the mother. These findings also suggest that this would be beneficial for child and caretakers. For the child it would mean two attachment figures to refer to and use as a secure base. For the caretakers it would mean that the mother and father are able to switch roles and fully share the caregiving, without negatively effecting the child's security because it has a secure attachment to both parents. These points are more fully discussed in chapter six.

A further issue impeding fathers is that of time. Fathers may display less primary caregiving behaviour merely because they lack the time and practice of being with their children. It should be noted that Lamb & Easterbrooks (in Russell, 1983) have pointed out that, "interaction facilitates the growth of parental sensitivity by providing

practice differentiating among, interpreting, and responding to infant signals. Fathers who have more interaction with young infants may be better prepared for sensitive responding later" (p. 177). Similarly, Russell (1983) has suggested that it may be that males and females both have the necessary biological structures for parenting but that they need the experience of childcare to either trigger or maintain this pattern of behaviour. This suggests that the highly involved androgynous father is beneficial in facilitating the growth of paternal sensitivity.

Another commonly held stereotype, often portrayed through the media, is that breast-feeding contributes to, and even ensures, secure attachment and positive parenting behaviour with the child. This ideal works to exclude the father from bonding to his child to an equal level as the mother. This has been assumed to be related to the skin to skin contact breast-feeding provides (Anholm, 1986). However, Lamb (1994) has concluded that early and extended skin contact has no enduring effect on maternal attachment. It can be assumed, therefore, that even though fathers are unable to breast-feed, this lack of skin to skin contact of the breast and mouth should have no effect on the attachment or parenting process for father and child.

Furthermore, the factors that may contribute to attachment from breast feeding, such as warmth and closeness, are available to fathers through the actions of bottle feeding or "kangaroo cuddling" (swaddling the child to the chest for extended periods). For the androgynous father, this indicates that there is no physical disadvantage or inhibitor excluding him from a full bonding with his child. This also indicates that the bonding and attachment are partially based on physical contact which is not sex related but actual body related.

In terms of the child's preference relating to one or other parent primary caregiving, fathers appear to be at no disadvantage. Kotelchuck (in Pruett, 1983) found that children formed close relationships with their highly involved fathers in their first year. He concludes that children do not innately or instinctively relate only to their mothers. The child's response to either parent is clearly more a function of the parent-child interaction than of a biological propensity. In addition, in his study of nurturing fathers, Pruett (1983) states that on the basis of clinical descriptions it is reasonable to speculate that the father-infant pair, evidence a kind of biorhythmic synchrony that is suggestive of the psychobiological rhythmically of

mother-infant pairs. That is, father and child appear to have a biological rhythm equivalent to that found in mother and child. He further concludes that although the mother's body may have been the original prenatal rhythm setting, infants seem to have increased their repertoire to include a rhythmic synchrony with the father's body as well.

For fathers, androgynous fathering means extending beyond the restricted role society expects of them in childrearing. This requires adaptability which the literature on primary caregiving fathers shows is possible. Field (in Pruett, 1983) found that while in many ways primary caregiving fathers interacted with their children like secondary caring fathers, in many other ways they began to act like primary caregiving mothers. Pruett (1983) concludes that primary caregiving fathers are able to form intense reciprocal nurturing attachments. In a related article, Pruett & Litzenberger (1992) reported that the fathers demonstrated the capacity to nurture a child adequately enough to insure its successful development. They "read" and understood their babies well enough to feed, change, comfort, pick them up and put them down on time. These responses reasonably adhered to the baby's most complex needs. Furthermore,

Risman (1986) found single custodial fathers to be very competent as primary caregivers.

In direct comparison with mothers, primary caregiving fathers appear to be equivalent. In her study of primary versus secondary caregiver fathers and mothers, Field (1978) found there to be both similarities and differences between primary caregiver mothers and fathers. She noted both primary caregiving mothers and primary caregiving fathers exhibited more smiling, mimicry of infant grimaces, and high-pitched imitative vocalisations than did secondary caregiver fathers. She provides a possible explanation for this in that infantized behaviours, such as mimicry, are elicited specifically by the infant gaze. Field concludes that the similarities between mothers and fathers when they are both primary caregivers suggest that father-mother differences are not necessarily intrinsic to being a male or a female.

How do children cope and fare with a primary caregiving father? Radin (1988) carried out a review of primary caregiving fathers of long duration. The consequences of high father involvement, she found, include stimulated intellectual functioning, increased

mathematics ability, and more nontraditional career choices. Various studies indicate that the involvement of fathers in early childcare acts as a positive factor in children's ability to deal with stress (e.g. Noppe, Noppe, & Hughes, 1991). In regard to the children's adaptability to a primary caregiving father, Pruett (1983) demonstrated that, "Children raised primarily by men can be vigorous, competent, and thriving infants who may be especially comfortable with and interested in stimulation from the external environment." (p. 273). In an eight year follow up to Pruett's initial study with primary caregiving fathers, Pruett & Litzenberger (1992) found the children's gender identities to be consistent over time, and their gender role performance to be healthily flexible. He found that having a father as a primary caregiver stimulated the child's curiosity and interest. While these results are found with children who have a primary caregiving mother, they are more pronounced with the father (Pruett, 1992). It is commonly seen that fathers have a large influence over cognitive domains (see section 3.3).

In his study of primary caregiving fathers Russell (1983) considered a number of developmental areas in regard to the effects on the child. High paternal participation was associated with children holding less

stereotyped views of day-to-day parental roles. Including the findings of other studies, Russell concludes that, "high father participation is associated with different socialisation practices...encouragement of independence..[and] encouragement of interpersonal sensitivity and expressiveness." (p. 181). From the influence of high father involvement it may then be assumed that masculine characteristics are beneficial in encouraging cognitive and social development. The reasoning behind these benefits is discussed in section 3.3 Masculine characteristics and parenting.

Primary caregiving fathers display the skills and sensitivity to be able to raise children. Furthermore, it has been established that they are comparable to women in the same situation. Thus, the androgynous father, with his feminine characteristics and behaviours of sensitivity and nurturance, could easily move in to the role of primary caregiver if so desired. On a lesser scale, the success of primary caregiving fathers would suggest that the higher level of involvement which accompanies the androgynous father (primary caregiver or not) is a feasible and non-traumatic matter for father and child. Indeed, section 3.3 illustrates the advantages a highly involved father offers, over the traditional father.

## *3.2 EVIDENCE FROM CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH*

Cross-cultural research on fathers, as with the primary caregiving father research above, illustrates the flexibility of the father's role depending on societal influences, showing the competency of fathers in child rearing. The cross-cultural research points out the capability of fathers to be as sensitive and responsive as mothers (Sagi, 1982). The cross-cultural research is also an illustration of the adaptability of fatherhood, the actuality of more involved fathers, and an example of the social influences on fathering. It also demonstrates how Western ideals and idioms have influenced what is expected of mothers and fathers. This supports the argument that parenting roles are a social phenomenon that can be shaped to suit the needs of society and the family. As Best, House, Barnard, & Spicker (1994) point out, "Parent-child interactions vary across culture...Culture shapes the parental beliefs, values, norms, activities, and styles of interaction [parents] provide for their children."

The cultural differences in, and influences on, fathering seen in this section indicate that fathering is strongly socially constructed, not biologically innate, and adaptable. That is, if fathering was a purely biologically based behaviour the difference across cultures would not be as great. Instead, however, the research shows great variance in how fathers from contrasting cultures behave towards their children. This would appear to support the plausibility of the concept of increased father involvement in androgynous fathering, in that it is a social and not biological influence which needs to be overcome. The positive findings from other cultures which promote and have higher levels of father involvement are a good indication of the possible success of androgynous fathering (with its emphasis on involvement), as well as being indicative of the benefits of masculinity in successful parenting.

Most of the research that has been done about fathers, in both their present role and potential one, has concentrated on Western cultures or has the underlying assumption of a society shaped as Western societies are shaped. Support for androgynous fathering can be found in considering fathering from the perspective of other cultures. This lends support to androgynous fathering by reinforcing that fathering

is a social phenomenon and is shaped to whatever form is seen as being best for the society of a particular culture or time.

By understanding cross-cultural differences, it is easier to conceive or establish the flexibility of parenting and fathering roles. One theory that is used to explain cross-cultural differences, which structuralises our understanding, comes from Whiting (1977). He suggests that parenting practises are the outcome of the socioeconomic parameters of adult life as represented by the cultures "maintenance systems". That is, "the constraints on parents' own lives (for example, women's workloads) lead to different styles of parenting as well as different patterns of settings for child life." (Whiting, 1977). Consequently, fathering and androgynous fathering is going to be highly influenced by the socioeconomic climate of the culture in which it occurs.

One stark example of the contrast in the ability and involvement of fathers in different cultures comes from Harkness & Super (1992). They considered the cultural foundations of fathers' roles by looking at evidence from Kenya and the USA. They found that the more modern American fathers were more involved with their children and displayed more of a nurturing side than the primitive Kenyan fathers.

In contrast, the Kenya fathers, in a culture of hunting and gathering, were more distant and there mainly to teach and guide their children, showing little nurturance. Harkness & Super (1992) suggest that the Kenyan and American fathers represent distant points on a sociohistorical continuum in the global family trend from extended families with strong father authority to small, egalitarian postnuclear families. This theory is reflective of the trends seen in 2.1 of societal period influences on the role of the father.

In light of Whiting's (1977) theory, these differences can be explained in term of the socioeconomic climate of the different communities and the consequentially different priorities in childrearing.

"The settings of father-child interaction...reflect the cultural construction of childhood in each society: while [Kenyan] fathers are with their children in the context of doing chores, eating and general sociability, the [American] fathers play with their babies and young children, take care of bedtime routines, and read books or watch TV with them." (Harkness & Super, 1992 p. 207)

The implication of this for the androgynous father is the reinforcement of the social and flexible role of the father. The

behaviour the father manifests is dependent on the values of society. In Kenya, the values of society are endurance and survival, and so the behaviour of the father reflects this by promoting skills to aid survival. The idea of nurturance is almost irrelevant as its importance in survival is minimal. Alternatively, the American father knows that survival is almost completely assured for his offspring, and so can concentrate on further aspects of development and life, such as nurturance. So the values of society dictate the behaviour. For the androgynous father this also means the values of society need to approve of father involvement and feminine characteristics and behaviours in fathers, for it to be successful.

These opposing fathers additionally illustrate the strong effects of family life and also of parental goals, on fathering. The working environment of each father had different effects on their availability to their children. The American fathers had well structured jobs enabling them to spend their free time with their children. The Kenyan fathers were hunters with no consistent structure to their job and poor quality time with their children. For the Kenyan fathers, there was the added inhibitor of the need to concentrate on survival

rather than affiliation. It also gives further evidence that fathering is very adaptable.

The above findings also reflect the historical trend of a father's career or employment relating to his fathering. This trend can also be seen in Jankowiak's (1992) look at urban China. There, father involvement is very limited and distant - in keeping with a society at the height of industrialisation and of the "absent, working father". It would be interesting to review fathering in China in a few decades time when there is likely to be a swing away from high industry if China continues to follow the trends of the Western world.

Another interesting cross-cultural study comes from Endicott (1992). She has looked at family life with the Batek, a nomadic hunter-gather society in the rainforests of Malaysia. In contrast to most Western societies, the Batek are extremely egalitarian and share the family and community workloads equally. The Batek fathering style is similar to other fathering styles in different hunting and gathering societies. Endicott notes however, the Batek do not consider childcare to be the domain of women only. Fathers play an important part in the social life of the infant. They hold, cuddle, and chatter to their children with

as much enjoyment as is apparent in mothers' behaviour. Further, the father is fully utilised in childrearing. When a new sibling arrives, the father becomes an increasingly important source of attention and comfort, as the new sibling displaces the child from its mother's attention and breast. Fathers tend to spend a lot of time in camp and often bathe, clean up and cook for their children.

Another culture with very high levels of father involvement is the Aka Pygmy of the Western Congo Basin who have been observed by Hewlett (1991). The Aka are a hunter and gatherer society who share child rearing duties equally. The Aka father has a very high level of participation in childcare. For example, the percentage of time spent holding an infant is up to 22%, compared to around 1-3% for most other tribal cultures and the amount of time the infant is in the presence of its father is 88% compared to the common 3- 10% of other cultures (Hewlett, 1991). The level of attachment between Aka father and child is also very high. As Hewlett (1991) states, "Father and infant are clearly attached to each other as evidenced by their frequent interaction. Fathers end up holding their infants frequently because the infants crawl to them...[Fathers] enjoy being with [infants] and carry them in a number of different contexts." (p. 140).

While the Aka have some culturally unique features, such as the geographical position and physical setting, to explain their high involvement in childrearing, there is also a larger, global explanation. Hewlett notes that in societies where resources can be accumulated or where males are the primary contributors to subsistence, fathers would invest more time competing for these resource and, less time with their children. In contrast, where resources are not accumulable or men are not contributors to subsistence (such as the Aka), fathers would spend more time in the direct care of their children. A similar phenomenon was seen in 2.1 with the rise of the absent, working father as industry increased.

What relevance do these two cultures have to androgynous fathering? They, again, show the variable nature of fatherhood and the social basis upon which the fathers role is founded. They indicate that for androgynous father, the limitations are cultural or social and not biological. The Batek and Aka are illustrations of the feminine side that fathers are capable of expressing and utilising.

The Aka and Batek both show positive development in their family structure, and illustrate the way in which the high levels of father involvement are beneficial in socioemotional development. Another culture shown to benefit from high paternal involvement is in Israel. For Jews, the family has long been the centre of the community, and of life in general. With the establishment of the Kibbutz in Israel, a lot of attention has been focused on fathering (and mothering) in this novel context. Sagi (1982) looked at non-traditional fathers in Israel and concluded that high paternal involvement was associated with better development in all areas, and that men with non-traditional attitudes were likely to enhance positive development in their children.

A consistent factor in fathering (traditionally and cross-culturally) appears to be his influence on socialisation. The most widely recognised and universal role of the father seen in the primitive cultures, is a social one. Even in cultures where the biological component of fatherhood is ignored, the father fulfils an important social role. As Bloom-Feshbach (1981) found, "the social relationship of the father to his children and to the family unit is established clearly in the many nonclass hunting and gathering

societies that predominated through 800 B.C." (p 77). This social function is mostly seen in the teaching of children. For example, pygmie fathers in the Belgian Congo, who are fond of their sons, will make miniature bow and arrows with blunt ends to help instruct them how to hunt. Hence, even though a mother is traditionally the caregiver of children in these societies, the father is still involved and has an opportunity to express love and nurturance in a social role. This universal social role of the father is an aspect of masculinity that is beneficial to parenting and is explored fully in the following section.

## *3.3 MASCULINE CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIOURS, AND FATHERHOOD*

The success of androgynous fathering relies on the ability of the father to adopt the advantageous feminine characteristics and behaviours for parenting. For the present enquiry it has been most important to explore the capability of the father to maintain a larger parenting role, and to adopt feminine characteristics. However, the advantageous nature of androgynous fatherhood requires that the

masculine characteristics and behaviours beneficial for parenting also be utilised and explored, if briefly, at this point. Sections 3.1 and 3.2 have illustrated the capability of the father to fill a larger role in child care and the ensuing benefits for the child, but they have not indicated aspects of masculinity which are positive for child rearing. Masculine characteristics and behaviours such as instrumentality and leadership may aid the father in his parenting role. In addition, the two most prominent areas masculinity which are advantageous to child development, are in socialisation and cognitive ability.

Masculinity produces better leadership skills (Myers, 1993) and this is one characteristic or behaviour that could prove very useful in parenting. The ability to set limits and lead by example are crucial to fathering (Santrock, 1995). In addition, the instrumentality of masculinity may provide fathers with a rational approach to childcare issues.

Other masculine traits that could be advantageous to parenting include independence, assertiveness, and rationality. For example, males are better with discipline - they set boundaries that they adhere to. Discipline problems do not emerge in the experience of solo

fathers, who follow stricter rules and are more consistent in disciplining their children (Risman, 1986). This is also reflected in the link found between father-absent boys and their increased delinquency type behaviour (Nelson & Valiant, 1993). Furthermore, father absence has been seen to be related to actual delinquency, mental disorders, and poor academic performance (Lewis, 1991). Males have better leadership skills (Myers, 1993).

Father involvement appears to provide cognitive stimulation. High father involvement has been constantly seen to relate to higher cognitive ability in children (e.g. Russell, 1983). Children of egalitarian fathers have been found to score higher on an internal locus of control and on verbal intelligence (Rossi, 1984). Since increased cognitive ability is so closely associated with high father involvement, whether traditional or not (Russell, 1978), it may be safe to assume that this is related to the masculine characteristics of fathers.

How does masculinity encourage or benefit cognitive development? It may be that the competitiveness traditionally associated with masculinity means fathers encourage cognitive ability in their

children. Masculinity has been associated with success involving leadership and intellect (Cano, Soloman, & Holmes, 1984). Masculinity might manifest in fathers a desire for their children to be successful and this may be achieved through encouraging cognitive abilities. Persons designated as either androgynous or masculine have been found to evidence a lower fear of success (Cano, Soloman, & Holmes, 1984). Therefore, masculinity may encourage successful characteristics and behaviours which, in Western society, are manifested in cognitive abilities. This is an advantage that the masculine side of the androgynous father offers.

It has been firmly established that fathers are a major influence on the socialisation of children. Fathers have been found to be a better predictor of a child's social ability than the mother (Bridges, Connell, & Belsky, 1988). While traditional fathers will encourage traditional sex-role socialisation in their children, it is known that androgynous fathers will encourage androgyny (Spence, & Helmreich, 1978). It can therefore be assumed that the socialising factor of masculinity is not limited to encouraging traditional sex-roles, but adapts to produce androgynous gender role when this is congruent with the father's expectations and values.

Fathers produce their influence on the child's socialisation through the forum of play. While the mother is seen as the caregiver, the father is seen as a play mate. It has been found that the behaviour the father displays in play, is very influential on the formation of the sex-role socialisation of the children (Barnett, 1990).

It would appear that the masculine characteristics and behaviours of the androgynous father serve to encourage the socialisation and cognitive development of the child. This is achieved through the forums of play, and encouragement of success. Furthermore, the fathering process and roles are benefited by masculine features such as instrumentality and rationality.

# 4

# FEMININITY AND FATHERHOOD

## 4.1 THE MATERNAL INSTINCT

"Maternal instinct" is a popular concept, which has traditionally lead to the preclusion of men from the role of primary caregiver. It is crucial then to examine whether a biological predisposition for caretaking exists in women. Maternal instinct is defined as the innate, biological predisposition found in a women to care for her offspring in such a way as to maximise the benefit to that child. Therefore, the premise of maternal instinct is that being born a woman naturally endows a person with the ability to completely care for a child, without necessity of instruction or preparation.

This chapter is not concerned with the physiological factors of motherhood, or the formation of the mother-child bond. What is

under debate here is whether there is a biological basis for caretaking capacities in women, and whether women must therefore be the ones to perform whatever parenting is required. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that maternal characteristics and behaviours have been mislabelled as an instinct and in contemporary society, if not irrelevant, can be displayed by both sexes. In order to repute these claims and promote androgynous fathering, there is a need to separate the notions childbearing from childrearing, and nurturing from pregnancy. The contention that a maternal instinct is misleading, logically implies that fathers are capable of feminine characteristics and behaviours in their parenting, and are in no way excluded from the parenting process because of their sex. This being so, there is no biological basis for the claim that a father is less effective as a parent. However, it should be noted, perhaps with caution, that most of the research dismissing maternal instinct comes from feminist literature.

The concept of maternal instinct may have evolved for a valid purpose and fulfilled an important function in historic times, but it is now outdated, with little or no evidence to support its continued reinforcement. In terms of androgynous fathering, the dismissal of

maternal instinct opens the way for both men and women to fully engage in all aspects of childrearing and belies any worry concerning the intent of "nature" in child care. It is in fact, perhaps misleading to consider this phenomenon to be an instinct at all. An instinct has the reference of something being innate and, as will be demonstrated, this is not the case with maternal behaviour. While the literature continues to debate the biological foundations of an instinct, firm evidence for it is limited. Maternal instinct is a social reinforcer of maternal behaviour which has misleadingly been called an instinct and inferred to be biological in foundation. Even if an instinct is accepted as a biological phenomenon, it is still an inappropriate label in regard to maternal behaviour, as will be demonstrated.

The concept of maternal instinct has been around longer than psychology itself (Shields, 1975). Maternal instinct had its advantage, in early history, of keeping the child near the breast and milk of the mother before the days of refrigeration or feeding formulas. The origins of its scientific discussion came with evolutionary theory. Evolutionists believed the systems dominant in the woman resulted in her greater abilities to lie in the moral sphere of life exhibiting this in the form of love and patience and childcare

(Rausch, cited in Shields, 1975). When the British initially discussed maternal instinct there was considerable support for the evolutionary view, and it was believed a woman's emotional nature, and maternal instinct, was a direct and biological consequence of her reproductive physiology (Shields, 1975). When the idea, along with psychology, reached America there was continued agreement as to its actuality.

Contemporary evolutionists and sociobiologists similarly believe that maternal instinct exists because there is a selective advantage to it. Mammals have few offspring and nurture and care for their young with great attention. This in turn aids the survival of the child and of the species. Consequently, it is theorised that maternal instinct exists to maintain the population and ensure someone is responsible for the child to aid its survival in the long term. It is argued that maternal instinct has been genetically programmed as a result of past adaptive needs (Rossi, in Chodorow, 1978) or that a hormonal/physiological basis for women's mothering exists.

Changes in thought and attitude about maternal instinct came with the behaviourists and the move, in psychology, away from the belief that behaviours were innately determined. The behaviourists believed

maternal instinct to "surface" when women conformed to societal expectations of their successful role performance. Maternal instinct came about only because women were fulfilling the societal expectation that they knew and understood how to care for children. The father of behaviourism, Watson, noted, "We have observed the nursing, handling, bathing, etc. of the first baby of a good many mothers. Certainly there are no new ready-made activities appearing except nursing. The mother is usually as awkward about that as she can well be. The instinctive factors are practically nil." (Watson 1926, cited in Shields, 1975 p 751).

From early this century not only did maternal instinct lose the connotation of an innate love and patience that early generations of psychologists had ascribed to it, but it was regarded as basically sexual, masochistic, and even destructive in nature (Shields, 1975). With the move to behaviourism maternal instinct was no longer regarded to be innate and was seen by some to be a social construction harmful to the self-esteem of women. It was felt that the pressure to instinctually understand a child was discriminatory against women.

As the following discussion shows, maternal instincts may have evolved to protect the interests of the child, but are redundant in our present society, very much as the appendix no longer has a physiological function in the body. Maternal instinct is also questionable, given that our society is very culturally and not biologically mediated. Polatnick (1973) points out that anthropological evidence concerning the origin of male and female behaviours is inconclusive and sheds little light on the contemporary situation, where the milieu is substantially different. She further adds, "A belief that women's responsibility for child-rearing first arose as a result of biological factors is not incompatible with a belief that this responsibility is now socially generated and socially alterable" (p. 58).

The belief and conclusions about maternal instinct are traditionally based on two lines of evidence. The first has a biological foundation, in that, maternal behaviour in most nonhuman species is presumed to be related to female hormones and consequently the same hormones are thought to dictate maternal behaviour in humans. The second has a societal basis. Since women are typically the primary caregiver; accordingly, it is assumed this is the way I which men and women are

meant to behave. There is in fact, as Lamb & Goldberg (1982) discuss, no reason to suppose that social practices of parenting are innately determined simply because they are widespread, and there is little reason to believe that similar systems exist in species as different from one another as rats and humans. Consequently the following discussion first considers the biological evidence and then the social context for maternal instinct.

Hormonal factors have been well established as playing a crucial role in the organisation and elicitation of sexual behaviour. However, the neural substrate for nurturant behaviour appears to exist independent of hormones. Neural substrates of behaviour are normally stimulated by hormonal events during pregnancy and parturition. What many research projects have demonstrated is that hormonal changes are complex. In addition, it is now admitted that hormonal effects - particularly their effects upon behaviour - are poorly understood (Lamb & Goldberg, 1982). At best, hormones facilitate the inhibition or disinhibition of behaviour in humans, but they are never sufficient in and of themselves to produce a particular behaviour. This indicates that the hormones women possess offer them no advantage in caring for a child.

After an extensive review of the area Lamb & Goldberg (1982) have concluded that the potency of hormones is established and multiplied by societal practices. These practises capitalise on and exaggerate actually very minor behavioural tendencies. They also conclude that there is no evidence that variations in the levels of the female hormones have specific effects on parental behaviour in humans (Lamb & Goldberg, 1982). Furthermore, Chodorow (1978) has reviewed the literature on genetic and hormonal abnormalities and concluded that no irrefutable conclusions can be drawn about the relation of hormones to maternal instincts or materialism in humans. She also proposes that a person's parenting style is largely determined by experiences and conflicts, and not biology, as the case of mothers who adopt children illustrates. They have no biological link to their children but still display maternal behaviour.

Further support for disregarding maternal instinct as an innate human characteristic comes from a study of rats. This study was by Rosenblatt in 1969 and concerned the development of maternal responsiveness in the rat. This paper has now become important for the case against maternal instinct. The study involved manipulating

the reproductive organs and the hormones thought to be related to maternal instinct, of both male and female rats and also observing the cycle of maternal responsiveness in pregnant rats. It was found that the basic maternal responsiveness of the virgin male and female rat was not dependent on the ovary or pituitary gland. Maternal behaviours elicited were therefore of non-hormonal or biological origin and similar in both sexes. Further, pregnant females did not readily show maternal behaviour. Rosenblatt (1969) concluded, "Maternal behaviour is a developmental phenomenon...in line with the synchronous nature of the mother-young relationship, [and] is based upon developmental changes in the young." However conclusive the results of this study are considered to be, it will be remembered that some of the literature dismissing maternal instinct, in fact opposes the generalisation from rodent studies to humans.

Continuing with biological evidence, several studies have indicated that men and women have similar physiological reactions to infants and the distress signals they emit. For example, in one experiment, the psychophysiological responses of mothers and fathers were monitored while they watched a video of a smiling and a crying infant. The patterns of arousal and irritation to crying or unpleasant

emotions, and relaxation to smiling, were indistinguishable for male and female parents in all studies. It has been concluded that the evidence refutes the conclusions that there are innate biological hormonal mechanisms which are responsible for females superior responsiveness to babies, and ultimately for the woman's greater involvement with the child (Pruett, 1983).

Chodorow (1978) draws from cross-cultural research to show that women are primary caregivers because of their lactation and pregnancy functions, and not because of an instinctual nurturance beyond these biological functions. There is also substantial evidence that nonbiological mothers, children, and men can parent just as adequately as biological mothers, and can feel just as nurturant. That is to say, that adults and children not directly related to a child have been shown to be able to supply the necessary behaviours, such as sensitivity or nurturance, which benefit the child and its survival. Chodorow does concede that there may be physiological processes in females which "prepare" women for mothering a newborn. She points out, however, that beyond lactation there is no evidence of what these physiological processes may be.

The biologically based research therefore, appears to establish that maternal instinct is not simply a biological function of every women, but is associated with other factors, such as social reinforcement. The stronger argument is that the perpetuation of maternal instinct had its foundations in social practices and expectations. The societal origins of maternal instinct come from the division of labour discussed in chapter two. Developing from this, women's mothering capacities became central to this division of labour. The concept and societal function of maternal instinct then developed to continue and justify the submissive position of women and continue to tie them to the home. Women are primary caregivers now because they have always been (Chodorow, 1978).

The research from a social perspective also questions the innate capacity or necessity of maternal instinct. Returning to the review of maternal instinct by Lamb & Goldberg (1982), they point out that each woman is subjected to many years of socialising pressures preparing her for a maternal role. The type of thing that is being referred to is the encouragement of girls to play with dolls or to pretend to be mothers (Perry & Busey, 1984) as well the societal idea that a woman is not whole if she does not have a child (Nakano,

Chang, & Forley, 1994). Lamb & Goldberg propose that even if hormonal influences do render women better prepared and suited for parental behaviours than men, this advantage is secured largely by way of an extensive overlay of socialisation.

Mothers and fathers have been seen to behave with equivalent activity and enthusiasm in interaction with their young infants (e.g. Bridges, Conell, & Belsky, 1988). Evidently there are no sex differences in parents' responsiveness to infant signals even though the mothers are generally the primary caregivers. Sex differences in terms of relating to children are seen to fluctuate depending on where the subjects are in the life span, there are, at some stages, increased pressures to behave in a traditionally sex-stereotyped manner (Lamb & Goldberg, 1982). These fluctuations further reinforce the idea that any behaviour (traditionally (mis)labelled as an instinct) which aids in the care of a child is not purely biological in basis, or sex specific.

Another study supporting the rejection of the innate basis of a maternal instinct is Blumberg's (1980) review of "The Abusing Mother". In this study Blumberg questions why or how pregnancy and childbirth automatically instil in a woman a positive cathexis for

her child. In arguing his case he cites the literature on child abuse, with such statistics as up to 70% of child abuse being attributable to the child's own mother. He concludes that the amount of intrafamily child abuse belies the concept of maternal-instinct and child abuse is a result of interaction of personality, marital and societal problems. Blumberg (1980) also points out that love, trust, hate, and mistrust are all learned by experience and imitation. The child who is nurtured and loved, learns from these experiences to love and care for others. The child who is physically harmed learns mistrust. Therefore, successful development is effected. Blumberg states, "*Parenthood is biological. Parenting is a skill involving positive cathexis and emotional satisfaction.*" (1980 p. 353).

It can be concluded, therefore, that there is no direct evidence linking biological sex differences with the varying potential for displaying a maternal instinct, or more correctly behaviours, exists among humans. To quote from Lamb & Goldberg's (1982) invaluable review,

> "The universal differentiation of maternal and paternal roles has probably come about because social practices have built upon [the] biological predispositions, thus exaggerating the differences and producing societies in which gender-

differentiated behaviour is the norm. Given the appropriate training and experience, men and women can be equivalently good as parents - behaviourally and emotionally" (p 70).

Evidence of the equivalence of the sexes is seen in the responses of men and women to infants, and the attachment of children to primary caregiving fathers.

Today, most researchers consider maternal instinct to be a socially constructed concept, and the term appears to be misused as a social reinforcer of maternal behaviour in women. This implies that because maternal instinct is a reinforced behaviour, and not innate, men who receive the same social reinforcement as women are at no genetic or social disadvantage when it comes to raising a child. Fathers are just as capable as mothers of developing "maternal instinct" and, thus, of being able to attend properly and sensitively to their child's needs and wants. For the androgynous father, this means that he is at no disadvantage or in any way precluded from a highly involved role in child care. It further supports the theory that a father can adopt beneficial feminine characteristics and behaviours to employ androgynous fathering, because the feminine behaviours positively associated with parenting roles have no biological, innate, or sex

specific foundation. An individual does not have to be a female to possess the feminine traits which are beneficial to parenting.

## *4.2 FEMININE CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIOURS, AND FATHERHOOD*

The association between feminine characteristics and behaviours and parenting roles is so deeply ingrained in our society and our psyche, it is very difficult to step back and catalogue these characteristics and behaviours. However, there are specific traits beneficial to parenting which can be seen as exclusively feminine. These traits and their behavioural manifestations are linked to femininity, not to biological sex, and so are presumably flexible between men and women.

Female norms within society are more supportive of empathy and social connections (Myers, 1993). Feminine traits associated with good parenting can be summarised as warmth, nurturance, sensitivity, and tolerance (Matlin, 1993). Women have usually been seen to possess the nurturing values or traits such as warmness, love,

emotional openness, tenderness, and softness. In sum, femininity is seen to encapsulate expressiveness and affection.

As will be seen in chapter six, nurturance and sensitivity are vital for secure attachment between caregiver and child. Sensitivity to an infant is seen again and again to be beneficial to bonding (Peterson, 1989). Ainsworth (1983) has noted that a sensitively responsive style of mothering moderates the responses of the child to events, as well as promoting a working model of security. Furthermore, Bretherton & Waters (1985) contest that a child, whose parents lack responsiveness, will build a representational model of themself as unlovable and unworthy.

That men can possess these traits to the extra benefit of the child is fully illustrated in chapter six. It is shown that the factors of secure attachment, sensitivity and nurturance, are just as accessible from male caregivers as female. Further support for the equivalent advantages of feminine traits in men or women comes from androgyny, where men do possess both masculine and feminine traits to the advantage of the child - as demonstrated in the following chapter.

# 5

# *COMBINING THE TWO - ANDROGYNOUS FATHERING*

## *5.1 DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION*

The definition of an androgynous father is a father who has both masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours (that is, an androgynous personality, as discussed in chapter one) and who shares parenting roles - both provider and nurturer (Rotundo, 1985). The androgynous father is a shared parenting situation. It is usually however a mark of the androgynous father that he is highly involved and interactive with his children.

The application of androgyny to parenting is a recognised concept. In her research on mothering, Halas (1990) described androgynous parenting as the, "transcendence of sex-roles, balancing of

personalities and family togetherness, change and fluidity in roles" (p. 229). Halas describes the androgynous parent as continually developing and growing, viewing tasks without sex distinctions, being very tolerant of others' choices, being flexible in relationships, emphasising both genders in the socialisation of their children, and working through conflict with ease and humour. While comprehensive, this description seems somewhat idealistic, and the androgynous father referred to in this thesis does not fulfil this robust scenario. The present concept of an androgynous father is closer to the Spence & Helmreich (1978) description discussed below. This parent offers benefits through androgyny, experience, and involvement, but is not without flaws.

To draw from the discussion so far, it has been demonstrated that parenting roles are a social construct, masculinity is beneficial to cognitive development and socialisation, and that femininity offers to child development the advantages of nurturance, warmth, sensitivity, and tolerance. The implication of these points is that the androgynous parent is a reality because parenting is a socially constructed role. Women have no innate advantage in parenting over men and therefore men can adopt the beneficial feminine characteristics and behaviours

of parenting. Androgyny offers the best of both worlds - the advantages in cognitive development and socialisation from masculinity and the nurturance, sensitivity and warmth from femininity.

As well as beneficial characteristics and behaviours from androgyny as a gender type, the two dimensions included in androgyny - masculine and feminine- each have benefits to offer in the parenting process. Females and those with an expressive orientation do have superior social support resources, especially in terms of emotional support and perception of support. But, females may be less willing than males to utilise support resources in times of need (Burda, Vaux, & Schill 1984). Here the masculine characteristics and behaviours of androgyny may combine well with the feminine to not only produce greater emotional support, but to also utilise such support. In reference to men alone, it has been found that feminine role behaviours, feminine identity, and instrumental personality characteristics all increase with the advent of parenthood (Feldman & Aschenbrenner, 1983). Feldman & Aschenbrenner (1983) also found that, "men as parents show more flexibly sex-typed behaviour, with the increase in feminine role behaviour serving to reduce the

previously large gap between feminine and masculine role behaviours." (p. 286). Thus, androgynous behaviour reduces the traditional sex-roles in regard to parenting roles and promotes a beneficial style of fathering.

Two features of androgyny (not specifically masculine or feminine) that will aid parenting are flexibility and person perception accuracy. Anybody who is flexible will more easily able to adopt different behaviours and produce appropriate behaviour for a situation (Bem, 1974). Related to this is person perception accuracy. Here androgynous people have been shown to be better than traditionally gender typed individuals in being able to accurately perceive the wants and needs of different people in different situations (Card, Jackson, Stollack, & Ialongo, 1986). In regard to androgynous fathering, this accuracy would be beneficial in dealing with the demands of an infant or child because the androgynous father is seemingly better at perceiving what the child desires. Androgynous parents have also been found to accurately assess the needs of the child before selecting the appropriate response. There is a positive relationship between parents' person-perception accuracy and children's' adaptive behaviour. Androgynous persons were more

accurate in predicting the child's perceptions of them. (Card, Jackson, Stollak, & Ialongo 1986). Androgynous young adults reported greater acceptance of a child's feelings, uniqueness, and autonomy (Flake-Hobson, Robinson, & Skeen, 1981). Positive results of the androgynous parent have been noted. Their children perceived them as more nurturant, accepting and encouraging of intellectual achievement than traditionally gender-typed parents.

Another way in which the androgynous parent would be beneficial to their child's development is through the expression of emotion. Androgynous individuals have been found to disclose and express love more than gender typed individuals (Ganong & Coleman, 1986). In their study, Ganong & Coleman (1986) found that sex-role orientation had a greater effect than sex, on self-reported love feelings and behaviours expressed in a relationship with a family member. They add that sex-role orientation is a better predictor of self-disclosure in an intimate relationship than gender. Specifically, Ganong & Coleman found that androgynous individuals tended to experience and express love toward a family member more often than did other gender-type individuals. They conclude, "Being a loving person may be facilitated by having the capability and willingness to

exhibit instrumental behaviour (assertiveness) as well as expressive behaviour (sensitivity, nurturance)." (p. 50). The open and positive relationships seem to work in many areas as androgynous people report significantly better relationships with their parents (Lombardo & Kemper, 1992). Therefore, an androgynous father may be better able to express his love and emotion to his child.

Parke (1979) also discusses the development of androgynous parenting. He cites research which found androgynous and feminine individuals to display more nurturant behaviour towards infants regardless of their biological sex. Parke also points out that the amount and kind of prior experience with children is a factor that may override biological sex boundaries. It is also shown that fathers who take on a primary caregiving roles share some of the interactional qualities of traditional mothers.

One of the larger and more thorough studies of androgyny and androgynous parenting was conducted by Spence & Helmreich (1978). They suggest that androgynous individuals would tend to be authoritative parents. That is, warm and accepting of their children, while also placing high demands of achievement on them. They

report that children of androgynous parents should be more generally competent, socially assertive, socially responsible, and cognitively competent than those of traditionally gender-typed parents (Spence & Helmreich, 1978).

Androgyny is the combination of masculine and feminine traits within an individual and an androgynous father is an individual who shares the childrearing tasks without ascribing to any particular sex-roles while utilising both the masculine and feminine aspects of their personality. An androgynous parent offers to a child a flexible and adaptive environment which promotes modern roles, emotional security, and advanced social skills. The androgynous father has the best characteristics and behaviours of the traditional father and mother, as well as the advantages of the highly involved shared father. The promotion of androgynous fathering is advantageous because it promotes more adaptable individuals in a constantly changing society as well as promoting the position of women to encourage true equality.

## *5.3 ROTUNDO AND RUSSELL - RESEARCH ON THE ANDROGYNOUS FATHER*

Two psychologists who have done a large amount of work specifically on the androgynous *father* are Graeme Russell (1978) and Anthony Rotundo (1985). Together this literature examines the development, theory and actuality of androgynous fatherhood.

In his study Russell found androgynous fathers carried out more child care tasks and interacted more with their children than did traditional fathers, which serves to reinforce the definition and assessment of the androgynous father. In addition, the fathers who participate more extensively in child rearing are also the fathers who are more nurturant and sensitive and more influential in their child's development.

Russell does point out however, that the participation of androgynous men in child care does not necessarily mean that a personality trait such as androgyny causes this behaviour. It may be that they become more involved for reasons completely independent of their

personality or sex-role. For example, maternal employment and social class have both been seen to impact on father participation.

Rotundo's (1985) work is theoretically based and part of an historical perspective he has written about American fatherhood. He sees androgynous fathering as emerging from the 1970's to the present day. Rotundo believes androgynous fatherhood has arisen in response to a profound change in American values and ideas that has resulted in the rethinking and reshaping of sex-roles. These new ideas and values have lead to a minimisation of the differences between the sexes. He states that, "the implication here is that women should not be confined to child rearing and housework, and that a man should not take his identity solely from a career and other worldly pursuits" (Rotundo, 1985 p 16-17). A good father, according to Rotundo, actively participates in the details of the day to day care of the child and is expressively and intimately involved with his offspring. In regard to the social construction of parenting roles Rotundo says that if history cannot describe the future of fatherhood it can at least suggest how the father's role will be shaped in the years ahead.

Rotundo believes this new style of fathering has caught on quickly with young fathers and has caught the attention of the mass media. Very pertinently, in regard to the role of mothers and fathers Rotundo explains, "Most important for the long term, the androgynous style fits best with women's changing goals and with the broader economic and social realities that are emerging in the late twentieth century" (p 19). The doubts Rotundo has about the robustness of androgynous fathering come from the restriction of this fathering to the middle classes so far and the fact that it is perhaps currently more women who advocate androgynous fathering than men.

These two researchers show androgynous fathering to be advantageous and more influential on children's development than traditional fathering or shared fathering alone. While Russell has considered the antecedents and consequences of an androgynous father, Rotundo has examined the history and development of this style of parenting.

## *5.3 THE CASE OF SHARED PARENTING*

A major component of androgynous fatherhood is high involvement, but this is not to say that the parents then share *all* roles and duties. The highly involved father is very similar to a shared parenting father. The differenced lies in the fact that shared parenting is the joint involvement of traditional parents rather than highly involved androgynous parents.

One researcher who has done field research in the domain of non-traditional parents is Diane Ehrensaft (1990). She has looked at parents who share all roles and tasks of childrearing, a parenting style that compliments that of androgynous fathering. That is, one aspect of the androgynous fathers advantage is from his high involvement. The shared father also has the advantages of high involvement, but does not possess the benefits of androgyny. In determining why couples decide to share parenting she found that the women's movement, the political activism and social milieu of the late 1960's and early 1970's had an effect on choices. A common belief was that one way to change the world was to start at home. Dual careers also often meant dual parenting. She produced the interesting finding that

a man's involvement in a child-related field of work increased the probability that he would be interested in taking on the role of primary parent. Men and women's need for a dual role were different. While working mothers were more likely to talk about fulfilling a need within themselves, the fathers were concerned with looking outside of themselves in regard to shared parenting. The couples also believed it was in the best interest of their child to share parenting. They wanted to raise children free of sex biases and felt their offspring would benefit from having two primary parents. Shared parenting often grew naturally out of earlier negotiations about the division of household responsibilities.

In a refreshing move, Ehrensaft (1990) also looked at the reality of shared parenting. As she points out, the daily caregiving of a child extends well beyond the physical, to involve empathy, emotionality, play, and nurturance. Childrearing skills consequently depend on not only physical fitness, but also on one's psychological make-up. While describing what men and women experience and how they behave in a shared parenting situation Ehrensaft uses the term, "separate but equal" - neither parent is more competent than the other, they simply have different areas of expertise. She emphasises that just because

these couples have taken on egalitarian roles, it does not erase the strong traditions and values of past generations. This is in opposition to the androgynous father who strives to extend beyond traditional sex-roles.

Ehrensaft found two main areas where men and women truly differed in childrearing. The first was in dressing the child. Mothers tended to be far more concerned with this and make an effort to have their child appear well dressed. Women shopped for clothes more and also paid more attention to the co-ordination of clothing. The other area of difference was the level of anxiety experienced. In all the families Ehrensaft studied, the mother was always the one who worried about the children more than the father (Ehrensaft, 1990). While having very modern parenting techniques, these parents were still influenced by the traditional notion that the woman should have the primary responsibility for the child. As Ehrensaft states, "the parents remained consciously aware of the deeply internalised ideology they were challenging in becoming men and women who mother" (p. 73). These two points serve to reinforce the social construction of parenting roles.

Ehrensaft (1990) is able to discuss some of the costs and benefits of shared parenting and having a more involved father. The benefits she found for the children of the sharing parenting couples included social flexibility and openness. The children also learnt about the variations in human possibilities. Their early exposure to parenting roles that differed from traditional ones, prompted a varied and flexible personality style, as well as the ability to relate to many different kinds of people and easily adapt to new situations. Shared parenting also helped to break down the patriarchal system of the family and encourage more democratic relations, as well as an overall sense of democracy in social relationships. These features reflect what was found to be part of the advantage of the androgynous father, mentioned earlier. The main costs of shared parenting included emotional suffocation and ego-centrism. In addition, if parenting styles were not consistent between the parents (regardless of the adopted style) children were more likely to show hypoactivity, anxiety, aggression or depression.

Therefore, in terms of androgynous fathering and high involvement, Ehrensaft's research offers the demonstration of the benefits of flexibility, variation, adaptability in relating to people, and the

promotion of democratic relationships. Her study also indicates, however, that high father involvement if coupled with inconsistency can have the costs of emotional suffocation, ego-centrism, and sometimes depression. Furthermore, the shared father does not offer the benefits of femininity that an androgynous father does.

To reiterate, parenting roles are a social construct. The different genders offer to parenting, different advantages, masculinity is beneficial to cognitive development and socialisation, and femininity offers to child development the advantages of nurturance, warmth, sensitivity, and tolerance. The inferences from this are that the androgynous parent can be a reality because parenting is a socially constructed role. Androgynous fatherhood is preferential in offering the best of two worlds - the advantages in cognitive and socialisation from masculinity and the nurturance, sensitivity and warmth from femininity. The androgynous father benefits his children through increased involvement, similar to that of the shared father.

# 6

# *PRAGMATICS - ANDROGYNOUS FATHERING AND ATTACHMENT*

Socioemotional development is a critical stage for children and society. Developing socioemotionally ensures the members of society can function in relationships and groups. It also ensures they are able to experience and act correctly upon their own emotions and consider those of others Attachment (a strong affectional bond between caregiver and child) is a major component of socioemotional development and has many consequences through out the life span.

Socioemotional development concerns the development of a child (and adult's) emotions and social skills. Emotional development includes the ties between emotion and the social and cognitive domains. These domains influence each other and are organised around major developmental tasks or issues (Sroufe, 1979). Social

development is mainly concerned with developing the skills to be able to interact with others and function in social situations. Socioemotional development is studied in relation to major behaviour systems in infancy - attachment, wariness, affiliation, curiosity/exploration. It is also studied with regard to major developmental tasks, such as physiological regulation, differentiation of self and others, and mastery of the object world (Sroufe, 1979).

The socioemotional milieu is multidimensional. Freud was amongst the first to acknowledge that infancy and childhood are important points of development and are times of life when massive progress and changes occur. Freud postulated that an infant's relationship with its mother is the prototype of all future relationships (Freud cited in Kromelow, Harding, & Touris, 1990). Because of its influence on future relationships and trust (e.g. Ehrensaft, 1990; Ward, Hudson, Marshell, & Siegert, 1995), attachment to primary caregivers is one of the most important factors during infancy. Attachment is an important part of socioemotional development because it impacts on the lifespan long after childhood. The following research demonstrates the consequential and considerable nature of attachment. Grossmann & Grossmann (1991) state, "Secure

attachment strategies in relation to significant others are designed to maintain and further develop the person's emotional coherence and integrity" (p. 108).

Attachment is a strong affectional bond. Attachment theory was first proposed by Bowlby (1969) in response to the question of why infants often protested so much when separated from their caregiver. In 1978 Ainsworth came up with a procedure to classify infants into two basic types of attachment - secure and insecure. A securely attached infant is comfortable in functioning and exploring their environment when their primary caregiver is in the area. While they prefer the caregiver to be around they are able to continue functioning if the caregiver is absent for periods of time, they are not overly upset and adjust to the circumstances. An insecurely attached infant will avoid moving around their environment or even leaving the caregiver. They have developed this response from either neglect or rejection from a key caregiver. The insecurely attached infant will either cling to their caregiver and scream when they leave the room, or alternatively they will pay no attention to the caregiver at all and derive no emotional warmth from them (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Infants are capable of attachment only after they have

developed cognitively to such an extent that they have appreciation of the independent and permanent existence of others, which is, around 6 months of age (Lamb, 1977a). Secure attachment behaviours include smiling, vocalising, burying face in lap, and lifting arms in greeting (Lamb 1980).

An attachment that is secure provides an infant with the ability to cope in its world and develop fully. An insecure attachment can produce mistrust and poor social skills. Ehrensaft (1990) has discussed six possible outcomes of an insecure attachment. These are mental and physical retardation, sociopathic personality development, hypoactivity, superficial interpersonal relationships, anxiety, and emotional insecurity. In addition, the effects that attachment has on the rest of the life span are far reaching and touch significant areas of life, such as close relationships and sexual deviance (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Ward, Hudson, Marshall, & Siegert, 1994). Development is a continuous and cumulative process, and what occurs during the attachment process will affect later life. The founder of attachment research himself, Bowlby, has stated, "attachment behaviour [characterises] human beings from the cradle to the grave" (Bowlby 1979, cited in Hazan & Shaver, 1987 p 511).

Attachment is positively the best indicator and most important stepping stone of socioemotional development (Sroufe, 1979). Attachment is influential over both social and emotional development and impacts strongly on relationships in childhood and adulthood. Almost every researcher who has written about socioemotional development has, if not given prominence to, at least discussed attachment (e.g. Perry & Busey, 1984; Sroufe, 1979). Attachment and its enormous impact are fully explained and illustrated in this chapter.

While attachment has serious emotional consequences, it is also very influential over social relationships. As Sroufe (1983) points out, "[Attachment] relationships are of special significance because they provide the context for the emergence of the self and because they represent prototypes for later relationships" (p. 45). Attachment is very influential over the development of trust and over the ability to self-disclose (Pistole, 1993). Furthermore, Sroufe & Fleeson (1986) note that early relationships have a profound impact upon personality formation.

Attachment with the father has great influence over the development of social relations development and the ability to explore and learn. A common finding is that the infant's behaviour with the father, in the role of secondary caregiver, is the best predictor of its behaviour with strangers (Bridges, Connell, & Belsky, 1988) and a big influence on the development of social functioning and exploratory competence (Volling, & Belsky, 1992). Lamb, Hwang, Frodi, & Frodi (1982) reasoned that infants generalised a style of interacting with attachment figures to initial encounters with unfamiliar persons. When an infant has more than one prototype to generalise from, the relative importance of each may be affected by similarities between the unfamiliar person and the attachment figure. The results of Lamb, Hwang, Frodi, & Frodi (1982) did confirm that the security of infant-adult attachment affects the infant's behaviour in initial encounters with strangers. The effect of sociability for both male and female strangers indicates that it is the father-child *attachment*, and not the father-child *relationship*, that is influential over sociability.

A further generally important and significant effect of attachment is on future adult relationships. Hazan & Shaver (1987) found that parallel attachment styles, such as Ainsworth's secure and insecure

styles, could be found in adult love experiences. They discovered that the infant-mother attachment was influential on the attachments formed later in life. They have theorised that romantic love is an attachment process experienced somewhat differently by different people because of variations in their attachment histories. Specifically, Hazan & Shaver found that subject's working models of the self and their relationships were related to particular attachment styles. Hazan & Shaver's links between romantic relationships and attachment has been extensively researched, with supportive replicating results (e.g. Feeney & Noller, 1990, Simpson, 1990, and Collins & Read, 1990). Additionally, Hazan & Shaver (1990) have illustrated similar links between attachment styles and work behaviour.

It can therefore be seen that attachment is a highly relevant part of socioemotional development. Research would indicate that it effects emotional acceptance and relationships. Insecure attachment has been seen to have some very serious consequences. Furthermore, attachment is a concept which continues to shape and influence socioemotional development well past childhood. As such, it is a

pertinent factor to consider as a practical example of androgynous fathering.

While the mother-child attachment has been reviewed and studied in exhaustive detail, the father-child attachment has received little attention. Consequently, this chapter has two areas of focus. The first is to establish the benefits of androgynous characteristics and behaviours in terms of attachment. The second focus of this chapter is on establishing the ability of the father to form a secure attachment with his child, and on the ability of the child to form more than one primary attachment. This goes beyond the concept that a father can attach to his children to demonstrate that an androgynous father has the best attachment with his children. This is shown by the fact that the characteristics from a parent which promote secure attachment are the feminine characteristics and behaviours. Consequently, the androgynous father will be in a better position to produce these feminine traits than a traditional father.

# *6.1 ANDROGYNY AND ATTACHMENT*

As will be demonstrated in the next section, the main personal characteristics and behaviours which promote secure attachment are feminine traits. These include characteristics and behaviours such as sensitivity and nurturance. As such this is what mainly places the androgynous father in an advantageous position in regard to attachment with offspring. However, androgynous characteristics and behaviours also have something to offer or enhance the attachment process. The two main androgynous features that are advantageous to attachment are flexibility and person perception accuracy.

Flexibility is a well recognised asset of androgyny (e.g. Bem & Lenney, 1976). This means that androgynous individuals find it easier to adapt to different situations or expectations. This is likely to arise from the possession of masculine and feminine traits which would facilitate dealing with any situation. In terms of attachment, this would indicate that androgynous individuals will find it easier to respond to an infant - adapting to the situation and expectations. Androgyny would encourage the use of masculine socialisation traits with children, while the feminine traits would help to cement the

emotional bond. Both nurturance and flexibility are vital for secure attachment.

Related to the flexibility of androgyny is the high accuracy in person perception that androgynous individuals usually have. In a study by Card, Jackson, Stollak, & Ialongo (1986) it was found that androgynous individuals were clearly superior in predicting children's perceptions of them. What this demonstrates is that androgynous fathers will possess a more accurate sense of their child's cues, needs and reactions, than a traditional father. As alluded to above and discussed below, response is one of the most important factors in forming a secure attachment relationship. Androgynous fathers would appear to be at a distinct advantage when it comes to this response issue and attachment.

Additional support for the claim of the superiority of the androgynous father comes from Russell (1978) as discussed in the previous chapter. He found that androgynous fathers interacted more with their children, but more importantly for attachment purposes, they were more sensitive and nurturant than traditional fathers. Russell concludes that androgynous fathers are more nurturant. This provides

empirical support for the assumption that androgynous fathers will find it easier to provide the characteristics and behaviours beneficial to secure attachment.

## *6.2 FATHER-CHILD ATTACHMENT*

This section illustrates that some of the characteristics and behaviours which seem most important to attachment are feminine ones. As such, the androgynous father is at an advantage in terms of attachment because he has the feminine side of his character to fulfil the attachment process. The traditional father may have more difficulty doing this because of the dominance of his masculine side. The following evidence supports the idea that fathers are not only capable of having a secure attachment with their child, but that they are capable of an attachment equal to that of the mother.

One line of reasoning that has traditionally seen the exclusion of the father from a pivotal role in attachment, is the idea that an infant is only able to form a primary attachment to one person. Early lines of thought (Mead, cited in Ehrensaft, 1990) suggested that an infant was

able to attach securely to only one person. Anthropological reasoning assumed this person was usually the mother because mothering is a universal phenomenon. The supposition was that the biological mother was the best person to fulfil the requirement (Ehrensaft, 1990) and as we saw in chapters two and four, for historical purposes, this reasoning is quite valid. Early attachment psychologists (e.g. Ainsworth, 1978) assumed, due to the cognitive capabilities of the infant, and the complex nature of attachment, that if a child did attach to more than one person, it would become confused and develop an anxious or insecure attachment. Ehrensaft (1990) however, found infants do have the propensity to attach securely to more than one person. Moreover, the infant typically develops twice as much trust, and does not divide the existing amount of trust between two people. From this it can be theorised that even if there is a natural pull for a child to attach with its mother initially, this does not exclude a secure attachment with the father. The fathers from this study were using feminine characteristics and behaviours in their attachment, as an androgynous father would do with ease.

Ehrensaft (1990) has compiled a comprehensive list of factors on which this attachment depends. These factors include: the availability

of the caretaker; sensitivity to the child's needs; learning how to read the child's signals; responding promptly and appropriately; providing adequate physical and social stimulation; and spending extended periods of time with the child. Research has shown that men are as capable as women of providing these factors (Grbich, 1990). Historically, society has seen males as less capable of expressing warmth, affection and sensitivity, however, this stereotype is rapidly being disproved (de Leon, 1993; Kaye & Applegate, 1990). Furthermore, females may exhibit some of these traits (such as sensitivity to cues and availability) simply because they are more practised at doing so as this is a role they have been pushed to fulfil for all their lives.

In addition, Parker, Tupling, & Brown (1979) have discussed three dimensions that affect the attachment relationship. The first dimension polarised the factors of affection and warmth to coldness and rejection in regard to feelings for the child. Dimension two is concerned with the directions and requests of the parent as either causal or demanding. The final dimension looks at parental concern. As was mentioned in the discussion of masculine and feminine in chapter one, both men and women are capable of providing the

appropriate degrees of these dimensions. Volling & Belsky (1992) have also determined the personal and social characteristics of the parent that promote secure attachment. While the following characteristics and behaviours are typically assigned to women, they are equally feasible for men (Grbich, 1990). The characteristics and behaviours include; good interpersonal skills, emotional sensitivity, a well functioning marriage, and the availability of social support outside the home.

There is ample evidence that suggests fathers do attach securely, when in a secondary caregiver role, to their children. Lamb, Hwang, Frodi, & Frodi (1982) found fathers attached securely to their infants and concluded that the security of attachment is independently determined by the prior pattern of interaction between the infant and adult. In regard to producing the attachment qualities found in mothers, Chibucos & Kail (1981) found fathers who were involved with caregiving at two months had secure attachments at seven months (a similar time frame to that of mother and child). They concluded that, "...the results of this study support the view that the father can fulfil attachment roles often accorded solely to mothers" (p. 94). Bretherton (1985) found that the quality of attachment to the

mother is usually independent of the quality of attachment to the father, and this is often due to their different interactional styles.

From the application of these studies it can be concluded that it is possible for an infant to have a secure attachment of equal strength with both its father and its mother. This application also demonstrates with almost monotonous repetition, that the traits identified as promoting secure attachment are those that are feminine. The above studies showed androgynous fathers have the ability to provide the factors needed, the emotional dimensions desired, and the personal and social characteristics and behaviours required for secure attachment, such as, sensitivity, time, stimulation and warmth. Furthermore, though historically these traits have not been associated with men, the modern androgynous father is able to produce these factors by bringing forward the feminine side of his personality. In fact, as this research illustrates, any person is capable of forming an attachment with a child, be they male or female, mother, father, or unrelated caregiver as long as they possess the important characteristics and behaviours such as warmth or sensitivity. It is significant to note that it is the characteristics and their associated behaviours which are important, not the masculine or feminine

ascriptions given to them. Thus, even if, as some still argue, nature has designed the infant-mother attachment to take precedence, there is still room in the infant's world for it to form an equally secure and long lasting attachment with its father, assuming he has the correct characteristics and behaviours.

While the theoretical construction of the father as a primary attachment figure is important, it is also useful to consider the practicality of this arrangement. An important issue in the application of the above theories to the attachment of everyday fathers is that of time. Of all the factors, characteristics, and behaviours influencing attachment in infants, the most important appears to be the amount of quality time spent with the child (Volling & Belsky, 1992; Ehrensaft, 1990). Traditionally, fathers have spent little time with their children and, as such, they have not been perceived as able to provide what is necessary to attach securely. Ninio & Rinott (1988) found that in a traditional family, the father is available for only 45 minutes of active interaction a day. Furthermore, only 6 per cent of these fathers took sole responsibility of the infant for more than an hour every two days. This indicates that perceptions that men are not able to provide the factors required to attach securely is well founded if based on quantity

of time presently with children. This perception is misguided. As previously noted, it is the quality and not quantity of time that is most important. Furthermore, if quantity of time is the deciding factor, although the traditional father may not have been able to give time to his children in the past, this may be changing, especially when the father is in the new role of equal caregiver. This would indicate that men simply require more quality time with their children for the attachment process than is traditionally offered during their day to day life.

Thus, it can be seen that the secure attachment of the child is dependent on a number of factors which involve feminine nurturant characteristics and behaviours. The androgynous father, relative to the traditional father, is at an advantage, when forming this attachment because he possesses the feminine characteristics and behaviours that are required. Secure attachment to mother and father, by the child, would mean that the sharing of parenting roles and duties would not be traumatic for the child. This is because both parents would be providing a secure and stable base.

# 7

# *CONCLUSION*

Androgyny is the presence of high levels of masculine and feminine characteristics in an individual. Androgynous fathering is a parenting style in which a father is not restricted by norms, and is able to utilise his masculine and feminine behaviours and characteristics. It is also defined by high levels of involvement and behavioural flexibility. The androgynous father is able to offer his children the communication, responsiveness, sensitivity, and acceptance which traditional parents give their children for successful development. Androgynous fathering is a parenting style which goes against many traditional norms and stereotypes of parenting roles.

This thesis has demonstrated the development, relevance and practicality of the optimal style of parenting of androgynous fathering. This is where fathers do not fulfil the stereotyped traditional role of fathers, but instead take on the characteristics and

behaviours of both masculine and feminine which are best for parenting. Androgynous fathering gains its advantage through high levels of involvement in childcare, the resulting experience they gain with children, and the utilisation of traditionally feminine characteristics and behaviours, such as nurturance, in these men.

It has been demonstrated that parental roles are socially constructed. Through history it can be seen how flexible the father's role and consequent behaviour has been. Paternal roles have adapted to the milieu and expectations of the times that shaped them. Equally, the place and role of the mother reflects societal expectations and acceptance. This finding is further reinforced from the investigation of primary caregiver fathers and cross-cultural research. The capacity for men to be highly involved in childcare is reinforced by the lack of present day relevance of the notion of maternal instinct. It can be ascertained that women have no biological advantage over men when it comes to caring for a child.

The masculinity of androgyny can offer to fathering help in the areas of socialisation and cognitive development. This does not, however, preclude the beneficial characteristics and behaviours femininity

offers parenting. It is still necessary for the androgynous father to utilise his feminine side and produce the nurturance, sensitivity, and responsiveness that is associated with successful child development. Furthermore, androgynous characteristics and behaviours such as flexibility and accurate person perception are also beneficial to fathering.

The androgynous father therefore offers his child the best of masculinity and femininity, as well as complimenting a feminist framework by allowing more freedom to women. Rotundo (1985) and Russell (1978) have both researched the androgynous father and produced evidence of his benefits, ability, and adaptability in regard to parent and child development. There is also research indicating the benefits that the high father involvement or shared parenting aspect of androgynous fathering offers. Finally, a practical example of the capacity of the androgynous father is seen in attachment. Fathers are able to form successful emotional bonds with their children through the utilisation of their feminine characteristics and behaviours.

The androgynous father is beneficial to the child through behaviours associated with femininity and masculinity, involvement, and

experience. He is beneficial to the family in helping to break social roles, allowing greater flexibility and freedom for fathers and mothers. This kind of fatherhood appears to have very positive ramifications, and as such is worthy of promotion and further investigation. Family therapists and clinicians may profit from the awareness of this style of fathering and the advantages it offers. In an age when more women are experiencing role overload, the androgynous father could provide vital support, as well as being advantageous for the development of the child. Androgynous fathering being offered as a style of parenting could help relieve the stress of all family members.

A further implication is that society may have to reassess which roles and gender-types it promotes. If the androgynous father is so advantageous, should androgyny in males be encouraged? This question has significance in New Zealand especially, where a "bloke" mentality is somewhat prevalent. It may be that new social norms need to be developed that will allow men to fulfil this advantageous fathering style without behaving in a sex inappropriate manner. Society strictly adhering to traditional sex-roles for men may be

discouraging and repressing a style of fathering that is extremely beneficial to the whole family.

While still a new minority, androgynous fathers would appear to be worthy of further investigation. Future research at this point needs to reinforce the trends and features discussed here. It is vital to provide further empirical evidence for the advantages of androgynous fathering. The backup of statistical evidence to the theoretical findings of this thesis must be the next step in examining or promoting the androgynous father. One idea may be to study the direct comparisons between traditional, shared, and androgynous fathers. Another progression for research may be to observe androgynous fathers in naturalistic settings and see if the results differ from those discussed here.

Additional research that would compliment the present findings is to investigate the androgynous mother and compare her benefits with that of the androgynous father. If the androgynous father is so advantageous, does this indicate that an androgynous mother will be equally beneficial? If the androgynous mother does turn out to be as beneficial as the androgynous father, then a new theoretical

framework of the family and what is most complimentary to it may need to be developed.

Research needs to continue to examine the roles that mothers and fathers fulfil. Understanding the significance and influence of the parental roles seen in society can only improve the understanding of, and work with, the family. Particularly, the role of the father and what he is capable of must have continued consideration and maintain the momentum it has had since Lamb's (1975) article. Riley (1985) points out that the question is no longer whether men are capable of high parental involvement, but under what conditions this should occur.

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